

# THE FELLOWSHIP OF SILENCE

BEING EXPERIENCES IN THE  
COMMON USE OF PRAYER WITHOUT WORDS

NARRATED AND INTERPRETED BY

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TOGETHER WITH THE EDITOR

CYRIL HEPHER

WITH A PREFACE

BY THE

LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

MACMILLAN AND CO, LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1925



SAN PIETRO MARTIRE.

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*First Edition, March 1915*

*Reprinted with Preface, May 1915*

*Reprinted with omissions, July and October 1915*

*January, April, June, and August 1916*

*January 1917, 1918, 1920, 1925*

## PREFACE

By THE RIGHT REVEREND  
THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

THE Editor has asked me to write a few words about this book. I can do so readily and with pleasure.

I am convinced, as perhaps we all are, by personal experience and observation alike, that there is too much talk and stir, and too little thought and quietness amongst us.

I am sure, in the same twofold way, that there is a great lack of the lifting up of the soul in quiet waiting upon God.

I think too that a large number of our people feel, and rightly feel, some lack in our Church Services. They keep us occupied, if we respond to their guidance: it is their strong point that they invite throughout the active par-



icipation of all worshippers. But, except in the quiet spaces at the time of Holy Communion, which all have not been trained to use, they do not perhaps leave us freedom enough.

Such a reverent, faithful use of "silence toward God," and of silent fellowship with others, in the holy place, is an expedient which may well be welcomed for wider use when recommended by those whose experience has proved to them its value.

Such silence is often spoken of as "Quaker silence." It is, we know, characteristic of the "Friends." Their use of it belonged to a passionate desire to part with everything—art, music, vesture, ceremony, even ordered speech—which might come between them and God. It was a reaction, with some of the un wisdom of reaction, in setting aside the organized religious experience of the generations. But the desire was a noble desire—and in a degree the method justified itself, both by the

testimony of those who used it, and by the rare fruits of a Spirit-led moral vigour and moral tone in "Quaker" life.

We may learn from it, without unlearning our love and reverence for older, dearer, and more sacred things which not a few "Quakers" by origin have come to value and seek.

I believe with strong conviction that the Church of England, if her life is to grow in strength, and warmth, and richness, and if she is to gather in, increasingly, into her unity the religious forces of the land, must be ready to learn as well as to teach; must frankly and lovingly recognize and absorb into her own practice and use things which she finds outside herself: it may be in other forms of religious life, it may be in ways still more distant from her own of working for the great aims of justice, mercy, and love.

None of us regret that the Church did this in the instance of the Methodist hymns. Few, I hope, would deny that

she gained again by drawing, a generation ago, from the trained and inherited devotion of the Roman Church in such matters as Retreats. There is more to be done, and in other directions, if only we are quietly loyal to the principles, and can trust one another to be so, which our own Mother Church has taught us.

Therefore I am not surprised nor displeased to see our Diocesan Missioner combining with "Quakers," whose personal name is one of honour everywhere, to illustrate, with their "first-hand" assistance, that to which he desires his fellow Churchmen to give thoughtful consideration. Other topics in the book I pass by. They are less easy to appraise.

May God bless it to the good of our common life, and give us the spirit of love and reasonableness and of a ready mind for all that is good and true.

EDW: WINTON:

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## INTRODUCTION

By THE EDITOR

THIS book might have appeared at least two years ago, but I am not very sorry that it did not, for this truly is the hour in which a book in praise of silence may with most advantage come out into the open. Now that this terrible war is raging, and Europe is filled with horror and confusion, and the world is ringing with the echoes of the noise and tumult of battle, is there not the greater need of centres of still silence, radiating hope and strength in a world of strife? Now, if ever, our modest call to silence may hope for a response. So we launch our little craft upon a stormy sea with good hope that



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we may pick up some strugglers in the waves, and bear them with us to a quiet haven. The war has quickened the instinct for prayer. Necessity is driving men to God. The silent fellowship in prayer which this book is written to commend, among its other noble qualities, goes to the very heart of intercession. The absence of words helps to concentrate the whole soul upon God, and leads directly to a prayer which is all desire and will, rising to the consciousness of the overshadowing Presence.

Two members of the circle concerned in what is here told have passed into the Great Silence. Allen Gardiner, the Vicar of Havelock, New Zealand, in whose church this book had its origin, died in 1912 while on a visit to England. He was of evangelical upbringing, and when I reached Havelock to preach his Mission, he told me so within five minutes of my entering his house, but he hastened to add, "Therefore I told

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the Forerunner, not to send us a low-church Missioner. We know here that side of truth, what we want to learn is the other, the sacramental." That was the man. He went on to say, "This is going to be a great Mission, I am certain of that. I know it. We have just had our Quiet Meeting, and I have not a doubt left. Not so much for those outside, but for those within it will bring untold blessing." I admit that his faith took my breath away. He proved to be a true prophet. But his assurance and conviction astonished and humbled his Missioner not a little. Afterwards at the Conference in the Bishop's house at Napier, when his turn came to speak he told us, in a voice of awe which moved us all, that for him the revelation of the Mission had been the discovery of the Blessed Sacrament, as morning by morning its wonder opened out to him. He learned the lesson he had waited for, not, as he said quite distinctly, from the preaching

but from the daily celebration of the Mystery, a thing to him utterly new and wonderful. At first acquaintance Allen Gardiner was neither striking nor attractive. His gifts were interior gifts. Fragile health and constant pain had left their evident mark upon him. But a week in his house revealed something of the real beauty of his spirit. *Requiescat in pace.* May he behold the Eternal Light!

Thomas Hodgkin, whose contribution to this book was placed in my hands shortly before his death, was as famous as Allen Gardiner was unknown. His religion had excluded him from Oxford in his early days, but Oxford made amends by honouring his book on *Italy and her Invaders*. It is often said that Catholic sainthood is limited to the Catholic Church. Thomas Hodgkin the Friend seemed to me to approach very closely to that type. Banker, country gentleman, historian, antiquary, he was more man of God than any of these, and

that was the impression he conveyed. His face, naturally beautiful, had in it that serenity and light which made one wonder if John Keble looked like that. I think of him as I saw him in my church in Newcastle at one of our Quiet Meetings, kneeling, doubtless out of his most Christian courtesy and consideration for our ways rather than his own. The old grey walls which for five hundred years had enshrined the splendour of a mediæval Catholicism, and now again were the home of rich Catholicism restored, looked down upon him there as upon the living image of worship and adoration. In one of our vestry conferences I remember his telling how he had once seen some poor woman kneeling before an image of the Madonna in an Italian cathedral, evidently pouring out her soul. "Could I doubt," he said, "that she left her burden behind her when she went away?" It was delightful to see him in his beautiful home at Barmoor, for me a never-to-be-forgotten visit, alas,

only just in time; or on the field of Flodden with "Marmion" on his lips, or receiving with his incomparable dignity and grace a Bishop fresh home from the Antipodes. Wherever he went he carried with him the atmosphere of still peace won in many a Quiet Meeting. That atmosphere pervaded Barmoor Castle. His address, given to the clergy of Gateshead, and given to us for this book, is in itself a unique proof of the honour in which we all held him in the North Country. I wonder what George Fox would have thought of the sight of his disciple sitting among the priests to speak to them of the virtue of the Silence. Doubtless he would have praised God, not without amazement. Dr. Hodgkin, with his daughter, who is a large contributor to this book, both visited New Zealand, and both came to Havelock, where, as Miss Hodgkin describes, they attended the Quiet Meeting. That was about sixteen months before I reached Havelock, where they

were still speaking of that visit. They thought that Thomas Hodgkin's presence had brought to their hour a special power, as I well believe might be, for personality radiates its influence in the silence as fully as in speech.

It remains for me to add a highly important condition under which we have written together in this book. No one of us is responsible for any statements except his own. No one of us has sought to write as from some common ground, but solely on the basis of his own full convictions. Not even the Editor takes responsibility for the opinions of his different contributors. The whole point of this little work lies there. Our bond, which I think has proved sufficient to give this book a true unity beneath all its diversity, is solely our common love of the Fellowship of Silence. It is some evidence for the power of that fellowship that Anglican can address Anglican and Quaker address Quaker within the covers of the same

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book, and each the other, with no proselytising end in view, only the desire to enrich our knowledge of the virtues of silence in prayer, and to know in real sympathy of heart something more of each other's thoughts and prayers. I have thought it simplest to place my own witness in the first part of the book, and our "Friends'" in the second, as on the whole the more convenient and true order. The larger part of this book is addressed by priests of the English Church to their own fellow-churchmen, commending to them a way of prayer used among Quakers for centuries, and paralleled perhaps by uses of silence in the Church, resembling, though only in some aspects, the Quaker silence, which prayer we Churchmen believe to be good and noble and full of power, and therefore, because Catholicism is nothing if not synthetic, by us too to be used with thanksgiving. To which, with warmth of charity and welcome offering of their treasure, our true "Friends"

add the richness of their own experience in its use. Few of our readers but will join with me in gratitude to our "Friends" for their witness. Fewer still, having read it, will doubt that they have a notable contribution to make to the record of the dealings of the Spirit with men.

In the third section of the book both voices speak. Churchman and Friend offer their interpretations of their experience of the Silence, and their reflections upon its uses, its virtues, its perils, and its possibilities.

We have guarded ourselves, I sincerely trust, from the errors of Quietism, of which we are well aware. Molinos has no disciples in this book. But we have not thought it necessary to withhold our witness to the virtue of the prayer of silence for fear of being misunderstood. Père Grou shall speak for me the last word of introduction: "It is not by agitating ourselves, or exciting ourselves, or making many acts that we shall



succeed in finding rest in God. . . . The soul that is under the action of God is never idle, as those imagine who have no true idea of what rest in God really means."

It remains to express my thanks to the Editors of the *Commonwealth*, the *British Friend*, and the *Friends' Fellowship Papers*, for permission to use articles that appeared first in their columns.

**PART I**  
**EDITOR'S WITNESS**



## CHAPTER I

### HIDDEN TREASURE

By CYRIL HEPHER

THIS book is an echo of the New Zealand Mission of Help, and a distant result of it. If it attains its Editor's desire, it will hold something, at least, of the spirit that swept us along in that memorable Mission. Like the rest of my brother Missioners, I look back upon that Mission as the experience of a lifetime, and in these pages try to tell, as plainly as I can, of one incident in that experience, to me the greatest that New Zealand had to give. There I found in a little church of my own Communion an old and very simple thing; a spiritual practice, a method of

prayer, which simple as it was, or perhaps because it was so simple, was at the time so vivid an experience, and has since proved so rich in its after-fruits and wide in its appeal in other lands and in other conditions, that after long and deliberate waiting, I desire to gain for it a yet wider acceptance.

This book, in which Quaker and Churchman write together, is itself a sign of one grace of the Spirit by which that Mission was singularly distinguished, I mean the virtue of unity in diversity. We Missioners were like Joseph's coat, of many colours, nor did we in our message seek the soulless and senseless uniformity which is gained by toning down the diverse colours of our Vision, till all that remained was the monotony of a neutral tint. All of us were evangelicals, and some of us were Catholics. There were none of us I think who affected strict neutrality, and yet the note of that Mission was unity. This book is constructed on like principles.

It throws its net wider than the Ecclesia Anglicana. In its pages Quaker follows Catholic, but neither abandons his principles. To us who write as priests in that hemisphere of the Catholic Church which speaks English and has drunk in from Mother England the passion for liberty, without which Catholicism lacks its crown, the discovery of a point of spiritual concord with sacramentless Friends does not mean that we abate one iota of our love of and devotion to sacramental religion. Beautiful and tender as is the silent fellowship of wordless worship it can never take the premier place which belongs as we believe by divine right to the Sacrament of the Upper Room. The silent worship which this book is written to commend, as we see it, is not the High Altar of the heavenly Temple but a corner of a side chapel in the cathedral of Catholicism. But chapels sometimes are very still and lovable, and full of the atmosphere of the Presence.

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One of the two Friends who write in this book has brought to it the fruits of the long spiritual experience which belongs only to the old age of the friends of God. He has been called from us before this book has appeared. His devotion to the Society of Friends was lifelong, and his love of its ways of approach to God is very evident in the chapter that he contributed to this book. We were able to meet on several occasions, and to speak together of the prayer of silence, with the most complete loyalty to our entire beliefs, and not only to speak together, but in this silent fellowship to pray together with a real sense of underlying unity that deepened in the Silence, but with no pretence that our credal differences were small or unimportant. We abandoned nothing, we did not shrink nervously from the fullest admission of our divergences, but as we met in the silence a bond of fellowship was forged between us, which gave meaning to our prayer for reunion,

yet sacrificed not one jot or tittle of our loyalty to the light God had given us. We did not in our approach to one another leave behind the wealth of our differences.

In the next chapter I describe the origin of these Silent Meetings in that far-off and favoured land. Havelock is a small village near to Napier on the Pacific Coast of the North Island of New Zealand, within sight of Kidnapper's Point.

Some Quakers there had asked the shelter of Ecclesia Anglicana for their Silent Meetings, and she had let them in, nay more, she herself had sat silent with them; and in that silence, week by week, hearts and spirits had grown together into union before brains and lips had learned to formulate concordant speech. Thither I came, and experienced for myself—though I came with little enough of understanding, sympathy, or expectation—the power which that Silence held to unite men in the sense of the Presence



of God. There is a point at which all radiating lines of man's approach to God converge. That centre is the point where man rises to the consciousness of God. It is at the summit of the mountain that all its paths meet. The way to reunion does not lie along the circumference, or in the long and weary and, perhaps, impossible attempt to make the circuit of the mountain's base. We must ascend to meet, up to that shadowless summit where we may stand bathed in the light. When man comes to the consciousness of God, he stands on such a summit. He beholds the Light, which is indeed the Light that lighteth every man.

This little circle at Havelock had no enlarged conception of any especial significance, beyond the supply of an immediate spiritual need, in their modest Meeting, but I came to believe that they had travelled some way upwards and inwards, near to the circle's centre and the mountain-top. They had found a true path towards unity.

Yet it was not this aspect of the Silence that impressed me at the time most powerfully, nor does four years' experience of its use suggest to me that this uniting force is its strongest quality. More vital still, to me, was the discovery of a direct and powerful way in which the work of prayer was made markedly easier than I had found it to be in isolation. The blending of silence with fellowship seems to create an atmosphere in which the sense of the Spiritual in man is set free. Now, surely, any practice or method which does that is adding praise to praise. And particularly one type of prayer, so difficult and so much neglected, seemed to thrive in this atmosphere of silent fellowship. Why is it that meditation is so little practised among us? All guides of the spiritual life agree upon its priceless worth, if not indeed its absolute necessity to the soul's growth. Yet, how few there are even amongst our communicants who continue in its diligent use.

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The meditation, which I found to be the basis of this silence, was an attitude of still waiting upon God, listening with all the faculties of the soul alert; if it might be that God would speak to His children. Is not this the very heart of prayer? Prayer is the uplifting of the heart and mind to God. It is a larger thing than the outpouring of our needs and sins and desires before the throne of grace. Has the Divine Word nothing for our hearing? What need of ours so great as to know His will for us? How shall we hear His secrets if our prayer is all to be crowded with the eager noise of our demands? Here was this neglected art in practice, and that without the sense of baffling difficulty. What was their secret? How had they learned to do and, apparently, to do with ease, what is commonly found to be so hard a thing? They were doing it *in fellowship*. The root of the matter was there. The soul of man is made for fellowship. Isolated, half its strength is gone. That

is what lies behind Our Lord's ordinance of sacraments. Man is not intended to struggle Godwards in solitude. In their Silence the Havelock folk had learned, even in their most still and secret communing with God, the value of fellowship. Men who being all in one place, and all of one mind, seek God in the silence side by side, draw from their companionship a force which gives the soul new powers. Was it wholly for their sakes that Our Lord took with Him Peter, James, and John up the hill of Transfiguration and into the Garden of Gethsemane? They failed Him, for they slept; but was it not His holy purpose in those supreme hours of His prayer to draw upon the spiritual powers that lie in silent fellowship?

Here at least, in Havelock, was a little group who had learned how to take meditation into their life and keep it there. That half-hour in every week was sacred to that duty. It was the outward symbol and shell of a definite

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spiritual exercise, not to be forgotten, nor waved aside under pressure of engagements: a duty to neighbour no less than to God; to the neighbour who would mark their absence and miss them. Thus meditation raised to fellowship had a new safeguard, but this was as nothing to the interior help that meditation gained by its escape from solitude. Meditation was not only protected against forgetfulness, preoccupation, and neglect, it was also enriched and facilitated in the doing by being done in fellowship. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name," said Our Lord, "there am I in the midst." What is that but the Divine assurance of the manifestation of His Presence to those who seek it in Fellowship? Meditation in every form that it has ever taken has been the art of the practice of the Presence of God. What Word more direct than this could we seek of God? What folly could be greater than to neglect fellowship in our

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meditation ? They did not call it meditation at Havelock. " Quiet waiting upon God " was Allen Gardiner's description of their Silent Meetings. That was the original Quaker note. But quiet waiting upon God is the very soul of contemplation and the goal of all meditation. They were doing it in conscious claiming of a Divine promise, unconsciously obeying hidden laws of the spiritual world and of the soul of man.

Here, then, I found, at home within my own church, meditation, an established and organized fact. Here they were succeeding where so many have failed ; succeeding in the strength of fellowship lifted up to God, and drawing down from Him its promised reward. In that little church at the hour of Silent Meeting there was powerfully present the atmosphere of the Other World. The still silence was living with the sense of God, and the instinct for God lying deep in the soul of man was thereby set free.

I do not at all desire to claim this as a unique thing, to be won only in this silent fellowship. There are, I know well, churches within whose walls there lingers this unmistakable atmosphere. "I cannot pass that church without going in to pray," said one to me of a certain London church. And truly, for many times and in many moods, I have proved it. When you enter within its doors, it is as though the mantle of the spiritual world was wrapped about you. Almost irresistibly you kneel, and the lines come true :

Earth breaks up, time drops away,  
In flows heaven, with its new day  
Of endless life.

Such an atmosphere I remember vibrant in the little church by Lake Qu'Appelle in Western Canada, adjoining Father Hugonard's wonderful Indian School. I came there as the sun was sinking, wearied with the long drive. The stillness and glory of the evening, and the beauty of the lake lying amid its circle

of low hills, doubly welcome after the monotony and flatness of the Prairie, cast their spell upon us. But within the church was a living stillness of another order of appeal. Nothing that I saw in the West moved me as that still church. It had not even the first beginnings of external beauty, but it held within its walls that harmony and rest which is the very air of home. We no longer pretend to describe these things as moods. Certainly they owe little to the aesthetic appeal of beauty to the eye. The most admirable architecture and the richest symbolism may be desolate of this spiritual atmosphere, witness many a Lutheran cathedral in Germany, and on the other hand the meanest iron room may have it. It is not a property inherent in the building. It grows and it can fade. But it is never found without a centre of intense prayer—and as its consequence. Most often where the Blessed Sacrament is daily celebrated, yet not always there.



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At Havelock there had been no such aid, though Allen Gardiner declared that in the Mission when the Sacrament was daily ministered this atmosphere deepened. There it was, I believe, the creation of the fellowship of silent prayer.

If I be right in my testimony, and in my interpretation of it,—if, that is to say, such circles of silent waiting upon God can do so great a thing for the world as to establish at point after point centres where the blessed air of heaven may be more freely breathed,—what more need be said to commend the Fellowship of Silence to the sympathy and the use of those who read this book ?

And these four years have not been without evidence to support my testimony. There is a church, that I know well, lying at the very centre of a great city and at its most crowded corner. Visitors it had always, interested in the beauty of its mediaeval architecture. Some of those who worshipped in that church began to use these Silent Meetings.

They soon observed that the church was attracting another type of visitor within its walls—those who entered it to pray. One day, such a visitor spoke to me, doubtless thinking me to be attached to the church. He told me that he had brought no less than thirty of his fellows from the business house where he worked to this place, “not to look round, but to pray here.” He had never attended a service in it, only he added, “There’s something in this church that I love, and I can’t keep away.”

I ought to say that it is not to the Quiet Meeting alone or chiefly that I attribute this. They celebrated the Divine Mysteries morning by morning. But it was only after they had added the regular Silent Meetings that this outside world of the passers-by began to enter and pray. Perhaps priests and people were thus being taught better to understand and use the Sacramental Mystery. Certain it is that that too increased side by side.

I commend to others, then, this practice of corporate meditation, boldly claiming for it that it does most powerfully create that atmosphere in the church where it is practised which ministers to a need becoming daily more widely felt and more pressing. Am I wrong in setting so high a value on spiritual atmosphere? God is to be found everywhere, it is true. There could not be a more deluding superstition than that He is more truly present in one place rather than another, or that the Ineffable chooses, as if by arbitrary fancy, favourite shrines for the manifesting of His Presence. We are surely well rid of the whole business of holy wells and sacred grottoes, of privileged sanctuaries and sepulchres, if they are to carry with them, as they so readily tend to do, the old crude conceptions of localized deity. But though the Presence is universal, the conditions favourable to its realization are not universal. God is everywhere, and may be found everywhere,

but not everywhere equally easily. Francis Thompson is right when he tells us that had we the eyes to see, we might discern the presence of the spiritual in the London streets :

But, when so sad thou canst no sadder,  
Cry, and upon thy so sore loss  
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder  
Pitched between heaven and Charing Cross.

So in the night my soul, my daughter,  
Cry, clinging heaven by the hems,  
And lo! Christ walking on the water  
Not of Gennesaret but Thames.

A great and not to be surrendered nearness this, but for our poor "clay shuttered" souls what is vital is the way in which we may behold that heavenly traffic and moving Christ. If there be anywhere within our reach method or practice, from whatever source it may come, be it old or new, Catholic or Protestant, twentieth century or first, which will dissolve this same clay that imprisons our vision, ought we not to welcome and make use of it? In cor-

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porate meditation I find such a way. It is no exclusive claim. I do not in the least pretend that nothing else will bring the same result. Far from it. Were I in search of the atmosphere which would bring within my reach that spiritual world that I had missed in Oxford Street, I should steal into a certain church hard by, and I doubt not I should find it. There, for months that have passed into years, has been offered an almost unbroken intercession for the conversion of London. Through summers and winters in a long chain of supplication men and women have been united in another form of fellowship in silent prayer. Now the spell of their prayer is upon that church. It is a thing that may be felt. The spiritual forces that have been so long at work there have worn thin the veil of the material. This precious thing is not to be bought with money. It does not belong as a prerogative to famous centres, or to those favoured places which can

command every aid to devotion. It is as possible, perhaps more so, in the country as in the town. The Fellowship of Silence will bring it. Let the priest be bold, and call his people, such as are attracted by the idea of silent waiting upon God, to gather with him some afternoon or early evening in his church. There let them kneel, or sit together in the Silence by the space of half an hour, guarding themselves against the assaults of evil by the saying of the "Our Father." Time and perseverance in their devotion will bring them a reward. Gradually as the months go by there will steal into their church that atmosphere of the spiritual, enriching it with the tender and subtle appeal which belongs only to the church that is a true home of souls.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EXPERIENCE

By CYRIL HEPHER

It is four years ago, but the recollection of it is as vivid as though it were yesterday, and it needs no effort to visualize its external setting. In a circle of pines and cypresses stands the wooden church, with its prim little pinnacled Gothic tower. It is wooden, though the white paint disguises it at a distance. Trees and architecture alike have come from the Old World, but the object which draws us to it this glorious spring afternoon of September is not in the least like the Old World's ways.

We are going to a Silent Meeting in Church. In the few houses that lie at

wide intervals on the hills round the church there live some interesting people, who here at the other side of the world are practising simplicity in living and concentration in thinking, because they are seeking God. They had told me already that they owed much to theosophy which had taught them the cultivation of their spiritual nature. Farther off, but still within the radius of this little church, is another group, Quakers of the finest type, including in their number the head of one of the oldest families among the "old identities," or first settlers in New Zealand.

It was from this Quaker element in his parish that the request came to the Vicar to allow the use of the Vestry once a week for "Meeting." He did not refuse. This being the Antipodes it was quite obvious that he would not. Presently the Quaker circle enlarged itself; the Vicar joined the Saturday "Meeting," so did his wife; so too, which is more significant, did the Theo-



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sophists. It migrated with Episcopal permission from Vestry to Church. It was supplying a felt want. It had become an institution. Informal, uncanonical, it drew on great occasions as many as twelve, an apostolic number. The chain of coincidence brought me news of this, not from the Vicar, though I was allocated to his parish for the Mission, nor from the forerunners of the Mission. A Quaker neighbour in my own street at home, knowing of my forthcoming journey, bade me to tea to meet a "Friend" from New Zealand, who had come to his house on his travels. One of my first questions was, "Do you know where Havelock is?" "Yes," he said, "I live there. Your Anglican parson there is a fine man. He lends us his church for 'Meeting.' You'll go to it when you get there, won't you?" At first that took my breath away. I took care not to commit myself, and murmured something about 14,000 miles being too far off to decide that. Un-

necessary care, for the more I thought of the stranger's words, "We meet on the basis of silence," the more clear it seemed to me that silence makes for orthodoxy. And what ill could there be in silent prayer? Prayer after all is essentially one; it is only its expression that is diverse. It is hard to commit schism or propagate heresy in silence.

So that sunlit afternoon in September, with the breath of spring in the air, and a gentle breeze from the Pacific rustling through the trees, I joined the little group, and we entered the white church. Within the senses were rested in the cool soft light. These New Zealand churches have often beautiful interiors. The architectural pretentiousness which imitates the Gothic, or the piety which cannot forget the outlines of the Churches of the homeland, stops with the exterior; there is no attempt at perpendicular arches; the wood confesses itself, and is not ashamed; the unvarnished surface

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of the Rimu<sup>1</sup> takes on a dark and pleasant colour. The little altar had no fittings of ceremony, but an east window of the ascending Christ gave the Catholic suggestion.

We knelt without a word ; presently some rose from their knees and sat down. We were but a handful. There was no sound of vocal prayer, no leader of our worship, but our service needed no voice to begin it. I cannot put into words what happened, but some aspects of the experience I must try to express. First there came very quietly the sense of a Presence. The work of prayer grew strangely easy. We were not resolutely fixing our thoughts upon a Friend in a far country ; we were listening to One Who was there in the Church—speaking. The still air seemed to vibrate with this Presence that could be felt. God was speaking to us, not in words, or voices, but in that speech which does not need to be uttered. Yet if I may

<sup>1</sup> A New Zealand wood in common use.

say so bold a thing, it was not what He was saying that mattered so much, as that He was there, and we with Him. That was enough.

Then again, one perception, that grew as the minutes slipped by unnoticed, was the sense of fellowship. We in that Church were no longer isolated individuals. It was unquestionably a corporate act in which we were engaged, or rather a corporate experience that had come to us.

Afterwards I came to understand that • this manner of prayer depends on fellowship of mind, and creates what it depends on. The Quakers end their meeting by shaking hands in silence. The symbol of fellowship cannot be repressed. If their experiences are like ours at this meeting I can perfectly understand the significance they set on their simple sacrament of friendship. They enter their meeting too in the spirit of unanimity. One idea is dominant in every mind : that of waiting upon God, waiting for the moving of the Spirit.

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I found, too, that the Theosophists attached the greatest importance to unanimity. The little circle at Havelock had been guiding their life and action on this principle. None of them had undertaken any new venture unless to all it had appeared right that he should. They thus revealed the belief which comes to the Catholic as an old idea, that the freest guiding of God, and the fullest spiritual outpouring is given through human fellowship.

As I try in my mind to weigh the experience, which I have told very inadequately, but at least without conscious exaggeration, or over-statement, what shall I say of it? It was to me a profoundly new experience, different in kind from other times of realization of the Presence, in that it was, as I think, the psychic approach to the spiritual world. Those who make excursions into the psychic in other interests than the direct approach to

God, spiritualists for example, use methods very like Quaker methods. They use the association in motionless silence, and they assert that where there is lacking unanimity of mind they have no success ; a single person who resists the common desire of the rest is sufficient to prevent any advance. The *séance* is a Quaker Meeting put to illegitimate uses, but they are alike in their use of the psychic atmosphere which is created in silence and fellowship. To many, the word psychic is a sufficient condemnation. My reply is, that the God Who made the spiritual made also the psychic, and that there can be no function or capacity of our nature which is not for holy uses. As a matter of fact the secret of the preacher's influence is often enough the psychic power with which he is endowed, which unconsciously he is putting forth.

I believe our Quiet Meeting to have been the consecrated use of latent psychic forces which led directly and

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deeply to the spiritual, to God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

In the second place the assertion of fellowship suggests new possibilities. In that little community of elements so divided as Quaker, Theosophist, and Evangelical Churchmanship, this Silence had proved a unifying force of extraordinary power. Later I made further proof of that force. My next Mission was in the parish of one who had been brought up in the extremest wing of Protestantism within the Church. Afterwards he told me how horrified he was when his Bishop interfered with the Forerunner's arrangements, and sent me to him instead of a missionary believed to be more of his own type of churchmanship. We were indeed poles apart, as far as any two men need wish to be within even the most comprehensive of Churches. But daily during that Mission we had our Quiet Meeting, and

<sup>1</sup> I may be quite wrong about this. I lay no stress on it. It is no more than my opinion. The thing itself was an experience.

day by day we grew into closer fellowship.

During those ten days that priest entered into the Catholic heritage of the knowledge of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, departing from prejudice lifelong and deep engrained. He bore public witness to this deep change at the conference of his diocese which followed the Mission. I am perfectly certain that without that uniting Silence in each day, that Mission could only have ended in disaster. As it was, I shall never forget its climax in the thanksgiving Eucharist, sung at sunrise, in a church filled with eager people who had driven in, many of them, miles; the altar decked with arum lilies, nay, the whole east end a bower of them: the kneeling men and women singing with tears of joy the last triumphant mission hymn.

We left the altar, but still they knelt on, lingering in a silence broken only by the stifled weeping of some of the women.



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But that ending was the direct fruit, so I know, of the daily half-hour of Silence. Is there no possibility here? If little groups of ministers and priests, Nonconformists, Churchmen, Romans, could thus meet, a solvent of our divisions would surely be set in operation.

A third reflection suggests to me that more use of silence in our own public worship would lift it to a higher spiritual level. In one church in the North, the silence after the Consecration of the Blessed Sacrament at the Solemn Eucharist, though but a bare two minutes, has taught a congregation a new understanding of adoration. Since it began to be observed, a marked growth in the acceptance of the Eucharist itself has been observed there. But this is so widely advised now that the only marvel is, that there is still left a Church in the land where the superstition still holds that the one thing at all cost to be destroyed in choral services is silence.

Browning knew a better way :

For see the rapturous moment  
Approaches, and earth's best endowment  
Blends with heaven's ; the taper fires  
Pant up, the winding brazen spires  
Heave loftier yet the Baldachin ;  
The incense gaspings, long kept in,  
Suspire in clouds ; the organ blatant,  
Holds his breath and grovels latent,  
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,  
(Like Behemoth when he praised him)  
At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,  
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling  
On the sudden pavement strewed  
With the faces of the multitude.

He was describing Midnight Mass in  
St. Peter's at Rome on Christmas Eve.

I have said elsewhere in this book that  
the Quaker error is the rejection of  
sacraments, but there is nothing neces-  
sarily antipathetic between silence and  
sacraments, nor was the air of Havelock  
unfavourable to the discovery of their  
virtue and significance. One, himself  
born of Quaker stock, told me as he drove  
me to the station, that he had decided

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to seek Confirmation, and every single Theosophist in the same village signed a request, with the promise of personal attendance, for the Eucharist to be celebrated in future on week-days.

Their leader told me that he had never felt the vibrations of the Divine Presence—that was his phrase—so powerfully as at the daily Eucharist which he attended in our Mission.

Well, I have told my tale. It is a tale of falling barriers. It is a tale of growing fellowship. Speech, they say, divides and work unites, but there is a greater unitive force than work. It is prayer, and of all prayer pre-eminently the prayer of Silence. The Babel curse of dividing speech lingers still, and infects even prayers when they are vocal. We cannot pray in other people's language. I found once in my northern parish a poor epileptic girl who had just been passing through a very bad time of mental distress and terror. She had, while on the margins

of consciousness, found comfort in the almost ceaseless repetition of a little prayer taught her by a Roman Catholic aunt: "Sacred heart of Jesus, pity me." For two days she kept incessantly speaking this little orison. "I was so frightened, and it helped me." So she told me. Her father, a Protestant, was shocked and grieved. Not even his strong love and pity for his child could stay him from bidding her to be silent, and to say it no more. The Babel curse was on him. It was not his language. He could not bear to hear this foreign tongue. But I have often felt as he did, though it was for me another type of spiritual speech that jarred. My Anglican ears, tuned to the Elizabethan music of the Prayer Book, are conscious of something discordant in Nonconformist prayer speech. Even the cultured and eloquent phrases of Mr. Campbell, and the unadorned simplicity of Dr. Horton leave me unmoved. It may be a confession of weakness, but

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it is a fact. The inevitably recurring phrases of Protestant piety, defensible enough, "Lord Thou knowest," and the like, punctuating the sentences; even the psychological contributions of the New Theologian, "Lord, we are met for the reaffirmation of our better selves," thrill me as little as the catalogue of titles of Our Lady in the Litany of Loretto. And yet, who is content to think that fellow Christians cannot even pray together? How are we ever to win the spiritual sympathy which must be the prelude to the first steps towards reunion, if we cannot pray together? It is not enough to keep our doctrinal differences out of our prayer, our fashions of speech in prayer have a separating force. I can well imagine that the Prayer Book, for all its incomparable English tongue, may vex and annoy some folk. It would not surprise me to hear of Nonconformists alienated by the formalism of "Dearly beloved brethren," or Roman Catholics repelled by the

cautious reticence of its prayer for the departed.

Well, if speech divides, Silent Fellowship unites. Silence is a territory where Mombasa and Zanzibar might meet without evoking a second Kikuyu. Intercommunion by those who are and intend to remain in organized separation, when it takes the form of breaking the Bread and drinking the Cup of the Lord together, as one, will always be perilously near to insincerity in the highest things. It will do little to hasten the coming of real reunion, for it is hard to see how "United Communion" can be other than a solemn outward and visible assertion and expression before God and man of consummated spiritual union. If that union is unreal, how can we rightly profess it? But the prayer of Silence does not affirm union, though it does most powerfully foster it by creating the invisible fellowship which must precede the visible reunion. Silence rids us of Babel. The soul of prayer is the same

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in every language. Awe, love, adoration, entreaty are Pentecostal enough to transcend the limitations of the diverse accent and speech of our vocal prayer. Deep in the heart of each of us who write in this book is the longing to help, in however small a fashion, in the hastening of the great day when all shall utterly be one.

PART II

QUAKER WITNESS





## CHAPTER III

### A FRIENDS' MEETING IN A CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

By L. V. HODGKIN

THE most impossible things happen out here, and happen in the simplest way. Still, it was rather a shock last Saturday evening to be told to get ready to go to a Friends' Meeting in a Church. Meeting, in Church, on Saturday evening, in the Antipodes! It sounded at first almost like a game of consequences gone wrong. I rubbed my eyes and wondered if I were dreaming; but, from the first moment, I liked the dream.

Then our host, a Friend and a minister, explained. The Vicar of their parish is

<sup>1</sup> A paper written in New Zealand in May 1909, and published in *The British Friend* for July 1909.

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a broad-minded man and has much sympathy with Friends. He comes of missionary stock. His grandfather, a missionary to Patagonia, was starved to death out there, owing to the failure of a vessel to arrive with their yearly supplies. Some time ago this clergyman invited<sup>1</sup> the Friends living in his parish to hold their meeting in the vestry of his Church, which is the convenient central point in this scattered community, as a true Church ought to be. They gratefully accepted his offer, and for some time the meeting was held in the vestry, the Vicar and his family joining our Friends in their worship. Quite lately the Vicar suggested to the Bishop of the diocese, whose son-in-law he is, that the Church itself would be a more fitting place for the little service, and the Bishop gladly consented to have it so used. Verily, (as I say to myself all day long and every day) this is a saner world than ours at home !

<sup>1</sup> Apparently at their suggestion.—Ed.

## A Friends' Meeting in a Church

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Meeting in Church on a Saturday evening gives a big shake in our Quaker ruts and grooves—the forms of our formlessness, of which we are hardly conscious till such a shake occurs. But it was lovely ! lovely all along, from the moment when we drove up to the white churchyard gate, and found the Vicar and a little knot of people assembled to greet us. None of them but ourselves, I believe, were Friends by birth or conviction ; and yet they all find in our hour of simple worship some food that their souls need. Their Sunday is refreshed by our Saturday evening.

We shook hands with one and another, and then moved on all together up the narrow churchyard path, under the massed shadow of giant cypress trees that deepened still more the twilight of the short May evening. It was only five o'clock, but dark as it is with us at that time in November.

The Church, of course, is built entirely

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of wood, like all the other buildings in country places out here. The outside is painted white, and seemed to shine by its own light behind the gathered gloom of the cypresses as we approached it. Inside, it was lighted only by one small hanging lamp. We all took our seats in the nave—a little company of, I think, eight or nine men and five women. The deep shadows of the woodwork enwrapped us, and Meeting began.

It was a Friends' Meeting, but it was more. We were in Church, but it was more. The atmosphere was different from anything I have ever known. The two forms of worship seemed to unite in a reality beneath and behind and above all forms, as two substances, united, form a third, different from either yet including both. And as I looked up, the fading daylight still shone through the halo of the Central Figure in the window at the east end, and illuminated it with a last faint gleam of light. Then I understood. Our little separate folds

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were forgotten. We were all one flock, following the one Shepherd.

The emptiness of the chancel preached its own sermon. There was no one in the pulpit or the reading desk, no priest by the altar. Neither was there any raised gallery "facing the meeting." We were all seated together, in simplest fashion.

Even the halo faded in the darkness when we had learned its lesson.

The silence lingered closely, lovingly, in the shadows. At first words seemed needless. Then a short prayer from the brother of the Vicar set us free to utter our needs and to share our thoughts. One or two Friends spoke and prayed. The Vicar prayed that when seeing our Divine Master on the Cross we might see Him ever as the triumphant Christ. He asked for our prayers for his work on the following day, preaching in a distant neighbourhood, and then he followed up the words of an earlier speaker and spoke of Christ as the Light

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of the World ; of the closing daylight and our natural dislike of darkness ; of the Light that shined in darkness and still waits for each one of us to behold it, until at last we all come to behold the perfect day.

The words were beautiful. But the silence spoke loudest to some of us. I thought of the "silence in heaven for the space of half an hour."

All too soon the little service was over. But the dew had fallen.

Outside, we broke up again into our ones and twos and threes, most of us lighting our own small lanterns as we separated, to illuminate our different pathways homeward, while above us the glorious Southern Cross was shining serenely over all.

## CHAPTER IV

UT OMNES UNUM SINT<sup>1</sup> .

By L. V. HODGKIN

No one who was present at the Edinburgh Conference of 1910<sup>2</sup> can ever forget the day set apart to consider "the Promotion of Unity,"—the "great day of the Feast," as it was called afterwards.

"All nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues"—the words bring back to us again the sight of that vast Assembly Hall packed with its closely serried ranks of delegates of every shade of colour. As if it were yesterday we

<sup>1</sup> This chapter was published in *Friends' Fellowship Papers*, March 1912.

<sup>2</sup> It was at that time that we were preparing to start for our Mission of Help to New Zealand.—ED.



seem to see Ch'eng Ching-yi, the Chinese delegate, with his pigtail and his oriental appearance, and to hear him announcing, "The Chinese mind takes no interest in denominationalism. China needs the one Christ." We listen to Bishop Brent of the Philippines, as he tells how, in old days, he held aloof from the Wesleyans in his diocese, but now works heartily with them,<sup>1</sup> and finds that "together we are rich, while I held aloof I was poor"; or to a Baptist delegate from Delhi, confessing that when he first tried to co-operate in industrial work with the Anglican Cambridge Mission to Delhi, "I looked at my big ecclesiastical brother, to see what similarity there was between him and myself. And I found there was nothing but our boots. You must admit that when you unite on boots you are at least on the road to co-operation!" Or, most impressive and emphatic of all perhaps,

<sup>1</sup> I presume that the good Bishop does so on the Edinburgh basis.—ED.

the tall spare form of the "High" Anglican Bishop Talbot of Southwark, now of Winchester, rises before us, as he states candidly: "We are all of us loyal to the things that divide us. But this Conference has raised the temperature of the atmosphere, and made much possible that has never been possible before." These are among the most vivid memories of that wonderful day, though time may have blurred the memory of the actual words used. But time can never blur the memory of the united silence that followed them, nor of the united saying of "Our Father," that seemed like the soul of that silence speaking.

And what has come of it all? Have all these high hopes vanished into thin air? That enthusiasm, that fervour, where are they? What have they accomplished? Are we any more ONE than we were? Were the words only words after all? Or did they spring from a grain of real faith, which though

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it were small as a grain of mustard-seed, must grow and grow until it shall become a force great enough to remove mountains ?

These are big questions. The answers are sure to be even bigger, too big to come quickly, or to come all at once, or just in the way we should expect. For "the Kingdom of God cometh *not* with observation." Yet we believe that hereafter, looking back on that Conference, and on even these slowly moving days and years of ours, it will be said that most surely

*the answer came,*

One of God's great ones,

Slow to condense itself into a period.

The working of the whole World-Pattern is on far too large a scale for our eyes to comprehend. But those who love to "think God's thoughts after Him" can trace a glimpse of the Worker at His work in the tiny stitches that are being woven close under their own eyes. The sight of the little bit of the

pattern that we can see gives us courage to trust for the rest of the design ; we remember Whose vesture it was that was "woven without seam throughout," and that as many as touched, if it were but the hem of that garment, were made whole.

It is a long way from the cosmopolitan assembly in Edinburgh to the London Church where a company of English Church-people and a few members of the Society of Friends have been meeting together week by week through these two last months of early spring for quiet half-hours of silent worship. Yet it is a little seed of unity, a seed that was sown at Edinburgh, and then blown by the winds of God to and fro across the world<sup>1</sup> and quickened mysteriously

<sup>1</sup> What happened was this : John Holdsworth, the New Zealand Friend, while in England in 1910, was pressed to visit Edinburgh while the Conference was in progress. There he had an impulse to visit Thomas Pumphrey, the Friend in whose house the conversation, described on p. 34, took place. That brought to me the necessary preparation without which I should not have been re-

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in hidden ways, that has now germinated in these "Quiet Meetings" in English churches.

George Fox speaks of the "hidden unity in the Eternal Being." Unity cannot be a merely human thing that we have to set to work to make. It must be a divine thing that needs to be revealed: a fact that is, eternally, that can never not have been, that can never not be. For those who have eyes to see, is not this the "Fellowship of the Mystery" that is being revealed to our generation? It is not that our differences do not matter. It is that they do matter; that they matter gloriously. It is not that we all think alike; it is that we think very differently, and that we thank God for it; since each new difference in the ways of our

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ceptive enough to learn the Havelock lesson, and to bring back to England the practice of it. The tale of it, as I wrote it for the *Commonwealth*, is embodied in Chapter II. of this book. That carried the practice across the Atlantic to Boston, and across the continent of America to Redondo Beach on the Californian coast. In 1912 I was allowed to plant it in Winnipeg.—ED.

apprehension of Him is the pledge and the promise of some new revelation of Himself to us.

In these "Quiet Meetings in Church" and in the Conferences by which they have been preceded, attended all of them by Anglicans, Theosophists, and Quakers, there has been no attempt to minimise differences. The differences are there, plain and palpable; but they have been left on one side, as all together we have pressed on to a more central place, in our longing to share unitedly with one another some of the precious things we have hitherto possessed apart.

Generously and heartily, though possibly not without some very natural misgivings at first, the Anglicans have opened the doors of their beautiful Church to us outsiders; and we—well, we may not have been without some misgivings on our side also as we entered. But the card hanging on the west door reassured us. It said, in large letters very plain and easy to read: "All seats

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free. *Sit where you like.* You are welcome." We took home to ourselves not only its welcome, but its teaching, and felt we had learned one lesson already. "Sit where you like." When shall we learn to say that in our Meetings? No longer "my seat," or "his corner," or "her place," but to each stranger or new-comer, considering his feelings before our own, "*Sit where you like.*" "You are welcome." Is not that Friendly?

After this, it was in a receptive mood, prepared to learn other lessons, that we moved on up the aisle and joined the other worshippers already assembled there. And then we found that not only have we much to learn, but that we also have much to give. For though all the externals of that quiet hour were strangely different from those we are accustomed to—its soul was our own. Our Quaker Silence was the jewel that shone in the stately setting of this Anglican Church. The same Silence that we know and love so well, and yet not

entirely the same. For this new Silence is pre-eminently a Silence of Differences, and that makes it in a way unlike our own familiar Silence of Agreement, just because it holds within it the promise of a still deeper Silence, the Silence of Unity-in-Diversity, some day.

Thus it seemed to us that first afternoon of early spring as we gathered in the evening twilight that yet was full of the promise of dawn. Since then, week by week, that Quiet Meeting has been held, in complete silence for the most part, except for the "Our Father" repeated aloud unitedly and very slowly at the beginning every time. Nevertheless, liberty has been generously conceded to any one who is "compelled by the Spirit" to utter a message. A few short sentences have been spoken more than once under the sense of that Divine compulsion which is the only real setting free. Still, the Silence is, as it was meant to be, the "unifying force," and it has been said to be "a wonderful Silence



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physically," such as we do not very often get even in our own meetings for so long a time together.

The need for preaching, teaching, exhortation—the varied needs of very various worshippers that make the "Day of Rest" too often a day of hard though joyful toil to Anglicans and Quakers alike in their usual services—dropped off in this stillness. Spoken words that would be perfectly right and blessed and beautiful in their own place would be disintegrating here. "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile." He called us—and we came.

Is not this deep longing for united rest constantly with us all?

On the one hand I believe that many members of the Church of England feel that this Silence is the fulfilment of a need of which they have been growingly conscious in their own services.

While for ourselves, is it not possible that these gatherings in the central place of stillness with others of Christ's

flock may be the fulfilment of the longing which has grown up amongst many of our members for "retired meetings," for some stiller, deeper place of power than is always attainable in our morning meetings for worship? As was pointed out in the March number of the *Fellowship Papers*, such "retired meetings" would become a danger if they implied a drawing away of ourselves alone into little groups or cliques, if we were to separate ourselves, even unconsciously, into an inner circle and an outer. "If we are keeping close to Him we shall not find we can be long alone." But if our object were not to separate but to unite with others in some larger unity, would the danger arise?

At any rate, not only this spring, but last spring, not at first in London but in one of the chief towns of the North of England, these "Quiet Meetings" in Church have been held regularly every Friday afternoon; and are attended by a growing company of wor-

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shippers—one silent flock, though drawn from many folds. Close outside the old time-stained walls of the Church the ceaseless traffic of a great city pursues its roaring way. But within them there is a sense of peace and of concentrated stillness. The shrill cries of the news-boys at the corner outside, as they detail the latest news of the moment, may in these latter days have pierced the walls occasionally. But they do not disturb—rather they seem to make the stillness stiller, to stab us into a yet deeper place of harmony and of power in which these

Discords quenched by meeting harmonies,  
Die in the large and charitable air.

If these gatherings continue and grow and spread in other places, as seems likely, it is possible that they may not only draw Anglicans and Quakers nearer together but also reach some of the lonely souls outside of this Church or that Church or any Church, who yet are hungry to find some form of fellow-

ship that shall be large enough to hold them, some of the many seeking souls whom Churchmen and Quakers alike have hitherto failed to reach. For Unity is not only Power, it is Life. "We tell the world that we are one in spite of our divisions," said a speaker at the Liverpool Conference in January 1912. "The world sees us in our divisions, hears us in our strifes, and does not believe that God sent His Son."

Will not each company of silent worshippers be a new pledge and warrant of the Unity which is ?

True, the Silence itself may not feel to us at first exactly the same as "our deep dear Silence" in our own Meetings, but statelier, more full of awe. That also may teach us something, and may help us when we return to our own Meetings. Yet, at the heart of it, it is the very same. Thus Silence itself may prove to be the one and only salve that will heal the old sore wounds that our dividing, rending words have created :—

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the wounds, not of this body of Christians or of that, but far more deeply the wounds of His Body, who is Himself the Word sent to us out of the Eternal Silence. "Laid on the breast of the Divine," His children will find themselves closer than ever to Him when they are no longer far off from one another.

## CHAPTER V

### ON SILENT WORSHIP<sup>1</sup>

By THOMAS HODGKIN

#### THE PRAYER OF SILENCE

As, in life's best hours we hear  
By the spirit's finer ear  
His low voice within us, thus  
The All-Father heareth us ;  
And His holy ear we pain  
With our noisy words and vain,  
Not for Him our violence  
Storming at the gates of sense,  
His the primal language, His  
The eternal silences !

*The Prayer of Agassiz.*

I HAVE undertaken to speak on the subject of Silent Worship, and though I feel some diffidence in addressing men who have given their lives to the study of theology on a theological subject

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at a meeting of the Clerical Society, Gateshead, January 10, 1913

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such as this, I take comfort from remembering that the reason why I have been asked to undertake this duty is doubtless because I have during a long life, as a member of the Society of Friends, been a regular attender of meetings held on the basis of silence, and so can say something from practical experience of the manner of their working, of the conditions which have seemed to lead to their success where they have succeeded, and of the causes of their failure where they have failed.

*Speech* and *Silence*, the two poles of man's being, in relation to his fellow-man. It was, I think, a Greek philosopher who said, "Speech is silver: Silence is golden." We have all of us, probably, known occasions on which we have felt vividly the truth of this adage; times perhaps of deep emotion, of joy or sorrow, when no words, however carefully chosen, would have fitly expressed for the listeners the thoughts of their hearts, when either in gladness or

in anguish the tide of feeling had to flow on undisturbed and unlimited by mere words.

Yet far be it from me, in the spirit of that old saying, to belittle or decry the power of speech, God's special gift, as we must believe, to His creature Man. The place which it holds in the spiritual universe is sufficiently shown by the fact that Christ Himself is called the Word of God ; but like everything else in which the free will of man is concerned its use is double-edged. As are the heights, so are also the depths. As St. James says: "Therewith bless we God even the Father, and therewith curse we men who are made after the similitude of God." Nay I know not if we can better express to ourselves the chasm, wide as the universe, which separates the use and the abuse of the faculty of speech, than by placing that Apostle's terrible description of the tongue, "a fire and a world of iniquity," over against the transcendent glory of the



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utterance of his brother Apostle: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Musing upon the many passages in which this same great expression "the Word of God" occurs in the pre-Christian scriptures, I have often tried, perhaps vainly, to imagine how the *Dabhar Jehovah* came to the sons of the prophets, through those long centuries in which the Old Testament was growing. Sometimes perhaps in an audible voice like that which woke the sleeping child in the Tabernacle of Shiloh, but surely not always nor often thus. More often in that impact of spirit upon spirit to which many passages in the autobiography of the prophets bear witness :

Who forged that other influence,  
That heat of inward evidence  
By which he doubts against the sense ?

Thus the author of the 73rd Psalm, who describes so powerfully the tempta-

tion to utter disbelief caused by the blatant prosperity of the wicked, attributes his recovery from that temptation to a time of silent waiting upon God.

“When I thought to know this it was too painful for me. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end.*” This is evidently no theodicy, hammered out by human argument and the prize of the battle of tongues. It is a strong, immutable conviction wrought in the prophet’s mind by the action of spirit upon spirit; it is a genuine revelation by God Himself to the troubled but seeking soul of the worshipper.

There were prophets who were installed in their office by some overwhelming vision such as that described in the sixth chapter of Isaiah; but there were also some, probably many, who could have said as Amos did: “The Lord took me as I followed the flock and the Lord said unto me, ‘Go prophesy unto my people Israel.’” That was

assuredly no audible voice, setting in motion waves of air and beating upon the tympanum of the human ear. It was no such material sound, but it was the impact, as I have said, of Spirit upon spirit, an impact so strong, so irresistible that, as Amos himself said (iii. 8), “The lion hath roared, who will not fear? *the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*”

And this kind of intercourse, this unspoken speech of the Divine to the human, was assuredly not limited to the prophets of Israel, and did not die with the prophet Malachi. St. Luke tells us that Paul and Silas were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia, and that when they essayed to go into Bithynia the Spirit suffered them not. No audible voice, no writing in characters of flame assuredly, but a powerful impression of duty wrought upon the minds of these servants of Christ; such an impression as made Livingstone the Apostle of South Africa

and Selwyn the Apostle of Melanesia, such a sense of the continued presence of the Master as at this day comforts *and guides* every true missionary in his often difficult and perplexing work.

Yes, we all admit that the Lord God does speak to His listening servants ; only the How and the When and the Where sometimes trouble us, and through fear of fanaticism, of the super-heated brain and the possible reaction, we sometimes put the thought away from us and say, "I will walk by the light of my own eyes and will take Common Sense for my guide." Especially do we Anglo-Saxons incline towards this, as we deem it, prudent course, and condemn, under the convenient label "mysticism," all that whispers to us of direct spiritual intercourse between the Creator and His creatures.

It was surely the knowledge of the reality of this unspoken communion between the Soul and its Maker which prompted the utterances, few but

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weighty, in which the poets of Israel exhorted to silence before the Lord.

Thus Zephaniah (i. 7): "Keep thou silence at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand."

Zechariah ii. 13: "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for He is waked up out of His holy habitation."

Psalm lxii. 1: "My soul is silent unto God: from Him cometh my salvation."<sup>1</sup> And (most beautiful, I think, of all these passages)—

Psalm lxxv. 1, 2: "Praise is silent for Thee, O God, in Zion: and unto Thee shall the vow be performed.

"O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come."

(Note in passing how gloriously the vision of the writer was expanded by his spiritual communion with the Unseen: no longer "Thy people Israel" only, but "unto Thee shall *all* flesh come.")

There is a mysterious blending of

<sup>1</sup> Marginal rendering repeated in v. 5: "My soul, be thou silent unto God."

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speech and silence in that celebrated passage in Job in which Eliphaz relates his spiritual experience (iv. 12-17): "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a whisper thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men.

"Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.

"Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up.

"It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof: a form was before mine eyes.

"There was silence and I heard a voice (or, in the margin, I heard a *still voice*) saying :

"Shall mortal man be more just than God ? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker ? "

We have to remind ourselves that it is not one of the accredited prophets of Jehovah who is here speaking, but a prosperous Arabian sheik whose worldly

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wisdom, as we find later on, was unacceptable to the Lord, but we ask, "Is this the earliest and best-told ghost story in literature, or had not this man, with all his lack of sympathy with the afflicted patriarch, really received on that eventful night a true message from the Unseen ? "

And now how can this craving for the silent communion of the soul with its Maker blend itself with the united worship of the congregation ? An important question truly, and one not too easy of answer.

We may get perhaps a hint of the answer from the mysterious Apocalypse (viii. 1). There, after the sealing of the 144,000 sons of Israel, and after the glad acclaim of the great multitude which no man can number crying with a loud voice : " Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb," an Angel opens the seventh seal and *there is silence in heaven for the space of half an hour*. The thunder-

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ous voice of the many millions of redeemed is followed by the deeper note of silent adoration.

Might not this also have its counterpart in all Christian worship? We all say many things to God, some in beautiful liturgies, some in earnest unwritten prayer. Should we not give Him some time to speak back His answer to our souls? As the writer of the 85th Psalm said: "*I will hear what God the Lord will speak*: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly." Wearied with words, eloquent words, critical words, words sharpened to the keenest point of logical penetration, how the soul of the worshipper would sometimes rejoice to have the heavenly half-hour of silence for meditative rest at the feet of the Saviour.

Yes, and we who have tried it know that the answer does come—

Through the silence, through the silence,  
Thou art calling, O my God.



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As the American poet Whittier wrote, a man who probably had spent more hours of his life in a little Meeting generally held in silence than any other of the well-known sons of song :

Heart answers heart in one desire,  
The blending lines of prayer aspire ;  
“Where in My name meet two or three,”  
Our Lord hath said, “I there will be.”<sup>1</sup>

So sometimes comes to soul and sense  
The feeling which is evidence  
That very near about us lies  
The realm of spiritual mysteries.  
The sphere of the supernal powers  
Impinges on this world of ours.  
The low and dark horizon lifts,  
To light the scenic terror shifts ;  
The breath of a diviner air  
Blows down the answer of a prayer :  
That all our sorrow, pain, and doubt  
A great compassion clasps about,  
And law and goodness, love and force  
Are wedded fast beyond divorce.

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<sup>1</sup> This passage which Whittier has quoted, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them,” is the watchword of all our worship. We meet, often very small companies, in the name of Christ, and we are often permitted to feel His spiritual presence amongst us.

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Then duty leaves to love its task,  
The beggar Self forgets to ask;  
With smile of trust and folded hands,  
The passive soul in waiting stands  
To feel, as flowers the sun and dew,  
The one true Life its own renew.

Yet in all this there is no Trappist glorification of silence as such, no desire to depreciate the spiritual efficacy of speech, reverently uttered under a feeling of dependence upon the great speech-giver.<sup>1</sup> As the same poet says :

Welcome the silence all unbroken,  
Nor less the words in fitness spoken.

Or to quote Robert Barclay, the clearest expositor of seventeenth-century Quakerism :

“Many are the blessed experiences which I could relate of this Silence and manner of worship : yet I do not so

<sup>1</sup> Compare Exodus iv. 10, 11. “And Moses said unto Jehovah, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant ; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And Jehovah said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth ? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind ? have not I, Jehovah ? ”

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much commend and speak of silence as if we had a Law in it to shut out praying or preaching or tied ourselves thereunto. Not at all, for as our worship consisteth not in the words, so neither in silence as silence, but in an holy dependence of the mind upon God, from which dependence silence necessarily follows in the first place until words can be brought forth which are from God's Spirit. And God is not wanting, to move in His children to bring forth words of Exhortation or Prayer when it is needful : so that of the many gatherings and Meetings of such as are convinced of the Truth, there is scarce any in whom God raiseth not up some or other to minister to his brethren : so that there are few Meetings that are altogether silent."

And as bearing on this question concerning the vocal utterances in a Meeting held on the basis of silence, I may say that there is often a quite extraordinary harmony in the silent meditations of the worshippers. Not infrequently, in

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my own experience, a brother minister has risen by my side and has quoted a text or used an illustration which has startled me by its correspondence with my own thoughts. "The very words," I have said to myself, "which I should have used if I had preached to this meeting." Of course the scientific enquirer may call this "telepathic" or some other Greek-compounded word which figures in the text-books of psychology, but the spiritual fact remains, and is, I think, worthy of being taken into account.

I said at the outset that I would speak both of the success and failure of systems of Silent Worship. Of its success I have perhaps spoken sufficiently, though I never can adequately express the spiritual help and blessing which I, who am naturally of a restless temperament, and who did not take easily to silence, have derived from some of our Silent Meetings. As Archbishop Trench has written of Prayer:

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Lord ! what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make !  
What burdens lighten, what temptations slake,  
What parched ground refresh as with a shower.  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower ;  
We rise, and all the distant and the near  
Stand forth in sunny outline brave and clear.  
We kneel—how weak ! we rise—how full of  
power !  
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this  
wrong,  
Or others, that we are not always strong ?  
That we are ever overborne with care ?  
That we should ever weak or heedless be ?  
Anxious or troubled ? when with us is prayer,  
And joy and strength and courage are with  
Thee.

But I have also known Silent Meetings  
which were dismal failures. There has  
been no atmosphere of devotion in the  
meeting. The little children have kept  
up one incessant fidgety movement  
and have often turned round to look  
at the slow-moving clock. The men—  
one cannot help surmising—have been  
thinking chiefly of their business ; the  
women of their dress or their household

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worries ; and the one predominant thought in all minds has been, " When will this tedious business be over ? " Or so ; perhaps, one like myself has thought. I have sometimes found after the Meeting was ended that some souls which I thought were chafing under the yoke were really drinking out of the wells of salvation. Especially I have found that " our little ones which we said should be a prey " were really partaking of some of the good things brought to them from the Land of Promise. But there are failures. We all see and acknowledge it, and I think that as a rule they proceed from an over-valuing of silence. It is not equally adapted to all mental conditions ; it needs to be introduced with discretion ; it will not compensate for the neglect of the gift of teaching ; it is as a rule more fitted for those who have made some advance in the Christian life than for those who are still on the threshold, and above all, *it should not be unduly*

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*prolonged.* When I was a child our Meetings (not often, it is true, spent entirely in silence) generally lasted for two hours : now they seldom last more than an hour and a quarter or an hour and a half, and I am sure they have gained in freshness and power by the curtailment. In the "Queries" which Friends used to be required to answer concerning "the manner of holding your Meetings" there was one form of words of almost continual recurrence "with some exception as to drowsiness." Now I think I may say that I never see a sleeper on one of the forms. It is true that, as Keble says, we need not

Try to wind ourselves too high  
For sinful man beneath the sky,

and in worship, as in our daily life, we may take a hint from the wise words of S. Benedict :

"Constituenda est ergo a nobis domi-  
nici schola servitii, in qua institutione

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nihil asperum nihilque grave nos constitutum speramus.”

One more quotation to end, and, if you will allow me, it shall be from myself. In an essay of mine on Early Christian Worship I wrote :

“No doubt ‘one good custom’ here as elsewhere may degenerate into something useless or even harmful. There may be a form of silence as dead as the prayer-wheels of Tibet. Nor can it in my opinion ever be right that the worship of a Christian congregation should be habitually and entirely a silent one. Where that is the practice there must be something wrong in the spiritual state of the members.

“In my conception of the matter Silent Worship is a beautiful still lake. It is studded with lovely islands, the vocal utterances of members of the congregation. In these islands grow the harvests of spiritual food : in them the forests of praise are waving : from them the fountains of prayer rise on high : but



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all are surrounded by the fair still water,  
and that water reflects in its surface  
the pure blue of the Eternal Heavens  
above.

“That is our ideal. Shall we not try  
to make it a reality ? ”

**PART III**  
**REFLECTIONS**  
**AND INTERPRETATIONS**



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SURRENDER OF SILENCE

By L. V. HODGKIN

IN the Convent of San Marco at Florence, St. Peter Martyr still looks down from the lunette above the doorway of the cloister where Fra Angelico painted him.<sup>1</sup> There he stands, finger on lip, throughout the centuries, saying to us, as he said to the early Brothers, for whom the fresco was painted: "Silence." Above the other doorways of the cloister are four other frescoes, each inculcating one of the other monastic virtues: Obedience, Self-Sacrifice, Enthusiasm for divine learning, and, the most beautiful of the whole series, the lunette of Christ as a Pilgrim welcomed by two

<sup>1</sup> Frontispiece.

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Brothers, which is placed over the door of the Hospitium, or Guest House, to remind them of Hospitality or Brotherly Love.

All of these other virtues are what might have been expected, but—Silence? Has that any place in the world to-day? Is it not time that that fresco faded away on the dim walls of Time? Yet it does not fade. St. Peter Martyr still stands, finger on lip, and he compels attention.

Luini in some of his tenderest Nativities has painted almost the same gesture, but how differently! In them the Divine Babe is represented with His finger pointing to His mouth to remind the beholder that it is no mere smiling human child that is pictured here, but the Incarnate Word Himself who is tabernacling with us.

These two pictured messages from the far past: the grown man, the eloquent speaker, with his finger laid upon his lips, silently saying "Silence,"

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and the smiling Babe pointing to the baby mouth that as yet had formed no word of human speech, but through which the Revelation of Glad Tidings was to come—these two messages, so different yet so intimately one, image forth something of what we Friends feel about the twofold unity of “our deep, dear Silence,” the silence that is to us the necessary atmosphere of our spiritual life.

For a company of people to gather together and arrange to sit in silence for a certain length of time would seem to be the simplest form of worship possible. At the first conference at St. Mary’s, Mr. Gardiner told his hearers how, when he was asked to allow the “Quiet Meeting” to be held in his church in New Zealand, it was the simplicity of the proceedings that attracted him at first. After various difficulties in arranging prayer-meetings in other places, a form of worship that arranged itself had its advantages. “No leader is wanted,”

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the Friends told him, "no pre-arrangement necessary; no subject chosen. We meet together in silence to wait upon God." "Very well," he said, "the Meeting is constituted"; and that was all.

But to agree to meet in silence, though it seems easy at first, is in reality a very searching experience. There are certain questions that cannot be avoided; and they go deep.

To Friends their Meetings for worship are, ideally, their supreme venture of faith.

He did say  
Doubtless, that to this world's end,  
Where two or three should meet and pray,  
He would be in the midst, their friend.

We come, literally believing that He who said that is with us, saying it still, and that He means it.

Arrangements that might be necessary were the Master of the House absent can be dispensed with when He is there. We believe that our Lord is still as ever

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at work in His world, and that He calls us to be fellow-workers with Him. We believe that He has a Plan even for the right ordering of each little meeting, and that, just in so far as the members of that meeting yield themselves to Him and yield their wills to His will, He will carry out that Plan in and through them, in ways undreamed of by them individually before their assembling together.

That is the belief on which we are prepared to stake our whole corporate existence, on which we have staked it throughout our history; and, though we fail often, that guidance and that presence do not fail. Not only grown-up men and women, but children also have proved it. A letter to George Fox from Reading, dated 1664, says: "Our little children kept the meeting up when we were all in prison." And again at Bristol, in 1682, it is recorded that "the men and women being generally in prison, the children kept up their meetings



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regularly, and with a remarkable gravity and composure," for "they might as well think to hinder the sun from shining or the tide from flowing as to think to hinder the Lord's people from meeting to wait upon Him, whilst but two of them were left together."

To watch the growth of a living Meeting for Worship through the united experiences of sixty or eighty minutes is one of those miracles of "fulfilling naturalness" that are ever new, like the unfolding of each new flower in the spring-time.

"See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewn thee in the Mount."

But this pattern has not been shown to us, once for all, on some mountain-top of vision. It is being revealed to us day by day and hour by hour in our worship which is our life.

Most wonderfully and mysteriously, as we wait in Silence together, we often

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feel the Unseen Weaver at work among us, arranging us, His threads, upon His living loom, as He sends the flying shuttle of His message in and out, to weave His Pattern on our fabric as He will.

Thus to us Silence both is, and is not, the centre of our Worship. It is the centre as our "means of grace," the only medium that we can conceive that is free enough to allow the unhindered working of the Holy Spirit in Whom we are gathered together, Whose Manifestation and Messages we await.

But it is not the centre, considered as an end in itself. To us, silence as an end is almost a confession of failure. Certainly unbroken silence by itself is a lower good than the communion we experience when, not in silence only but also through the lips of our fellow-worshippers, the soul of the Silence itself speaks to us and feeds us with living words.

That is our Bread of Life, and often

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it is sent to us through the humblest and most unexpected messengers. Thus is the miracle of the loaves and fishes repeated before us till it becomes divinely natural to expect it and to count upon it ; and the one fear is that we ourselves may fail, through false humility, when we in our turn are called to share and serve.

Little in Christ's hands goes far.

Yield thy poor best and nurse not how or why,  
Lest one day, seeing all about thee spread  
A mighty crowd, and marvellously fed,  
Thy heart break out into a bitter cry,  
I might have furnished, I, yea, even I  
The two small fishes and the barley bread.<sup>1</sup>

We never really believe in God's power till we find that it is great enough to work even through us everyday men and women ; till we discover that not even all the littlenesses and mistakes and feeblenesses and ignorances in these soiled and stained and bruised and broken lives of ours will be allowed to hinder its working, if only they are not

<sup>1</sup> F. Langbrdge, *Restful Thoughts for Dusty Ways*.

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wilful failures on our part, and if only we are ready to surrender our whole selves, body and soul, and, above all, our will, to be the channels of the Divine Will that waits to use us.

Emerson says that the Gulf Stream will run through a straw—if only it is parallel to the current. But even\*that simile is too abstract, not organic enough. The *Theologia Germanica* is nearer to the living reality: “I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness as his own right hand is to a man.” Or in the prayer of one of our own Quaker Saints: “Take my hands and use them; take my lips and speak through them; take my heart and use it as a lamp of love by which Thy light may shine in this dark world of selfishness.”<sup>1</sup>

That is the centre of our Meetings for Worship. The essential thing to us is that however few or many may be gathered together they should be a company of surrendered selves, ready

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Rowntree, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 267.

to be used just if, and when, and how the Spirit wills.

Surrender is the key to all the Mysteries. Our Quaker Silence is essentially a Surrender. But if surrender of will is the one thing needful, what follows after is, in comparison, a matter of detail. Yet from the oneness of surrender follows a oneness of effect, however different may be its manifestations. That is why we do not feel, ideally, any antagonism between the silence and the spoken words that may issue from it, but which should not break it. They should be, they are in truth, not two different things but one and the same, a "twofold unity" as was said before; as intimately parts of one whole as concave and convex are aspects of one sphere. Therefore the real question for a Friend to answer about any meeting is not, "Did you speak?" or "Did you keep silence?" but, a far deeper one, "Did you obey?" In the quaint, ungrammatical, but

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searching Quaker phrase of a bygone day, "Was thee faithful?"

"How do you know?" "How can you possibly distinguish a real message from the imaginings of your own heart or from the promptings of your own subconscious self?" These are questions that we are often asked, and that we often ask ourselves. The only answer is that here as elsewhere the *Via Crucis* does prove itself at length to be also a *Via Lucis*. Sooner or later we do know what we are meant to do, and can choose to obey that call, if we will. It is an incommunicable experience, not to be spoken of lightly. Yet, to those who have shared in it, it is one of the supreme realities of life, in comparison with which most other experiences seem shadowy and dream-like. When that call comes in the Silence, fainter though it be than the faintest whisper, unheard by even the nearest and dearest sitting by, there is a clearness and insistency about it that cannot be mistaken. "The sheep

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follow Him for they know His voice.” It is just that; a personal knowledge that issues in obedience. When that call comes, the doubts, the questions, even the agony (it may be) that have preceded it, are all swallowed up in an overwhelming joy. Those who have shared even dimly and faintly in this experience know that they are united in a bond that words can never break. Differ as we may from one another on many points, still, underneath all our differences, we understand. Friends are often smiled at, in a kindly way, for the freemasonry by which they welcome each other all the world over. The homely signs by which this freemasonry often expresses itself are but the outward indications of this deep inward oneness of surrender. Of course our obedience is a slow growth. We make many mistakes, when we “outrun our Guide or lag too far behind to hear His voice,” but even through these mistakes we may learn; or rather, He most surely teaches us.

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That is the reason why, when, as too often happens, our meetings fall far short of the ideal, our faith in the reality of the 'Unseen Presence and Leadership remains unshaken. Each one is too conscious of the patience needed for him or her alone to dare to be overmuch in a hurry for anybody else. How can we wonder when others stumble, we who have stumbled so often ourselves? "What is that to thee? Follow *thou* Me." It is this attitude of active obedience that keeps our souls alert, and makes the Silence a living fountain, not a stagnant pond. Strangers sometimes ask if it is necessary to make the mind "quite vacant" before coming to a Friends' Meeting. There could hardly be a greater mistake. Stillness is the exact opposite of emptiness. If a pail is being shaken violently, even a very little water at the bottom will spill over; but if the pail is still, it can be safely filled up to the brim. A University student, who has recently joined us,



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said to me : " I went to Meeting at first just for the quiet hour and the rest. I don't know how I should ever have managed to get through my exams. without it ; there was such a whirl all round me and within too. But now that I have become a Friend myself, I find that the rest is only part of it. Meeting now is often very hard work." It is indeed, and that is the best of it. The Silence is as far as possible from being a kind of Nirvana. It may be, it should be, peace-full ; but it is often a strenuous peace.<sup>1</sup> Real active listening is needed to know, to be sure, when the call comes, what the Message is, and to learn how to deliver it faithfully. It is just this alert readiness to obey

<sup>1</sup> Compare the following passage by an unknown writer in the *Spectator* twenty years ago : " Peace is a positive experience, not the absence of all experience. It is the reconciliation of the soul to the master-power that rules the world, not the cessation of all experience whether sweet or bitter on the subject. Silence is often the occasion for peace, because silence is an opportunity for the deeper life. But as for extinction, it is no more peace than it is pain. Peace is just as much a positive and vivid experience as pain is."—*Spectator*, Dec. 12, 1893.

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that furnishes the discipline—a kind of spiritual drill by which souls grow strong and “faculties are exercised by reason of use.”

To go to a Meeting determined to speak or determined to keep silence are both unquakerly, and are practically identical states of mind. Both say, in effect, “I know what is best: I will choose.” Even one Friend who goes in that spirit, determined to speak, come what may, or resolute not to do so, can do a good deal to kill a Meeting, and to prevent its being held, as we say, “in the life.” On the other hand even one humble faithful follower, who goes self-emptying and ready to be used, may sometimes be the means of quickening a whole assembly. It has to be remembered that this silent worship, dependent as it is on the attunement of many minds, is in a way a delicate instrument, more delicate than even the telephone and the telegraph which transmit messages in the material world,

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and therefore easily jarred; yet it is even more certain and reliable in its working when faithfully used.

Silence has perils of its own, just as speech has, but we find in practice that there are fewer perils in the two things used together than in either apart. To us, at any rate, compulsory silence is not healthy. To spend an hour in prearranged unbroken silence, where there is not liberty to speak, is like being shut up in a hothouse. True, there may be wonderful and beautiful plants all around us, exotic flowers, and fragrant scents, almost overpowering in their sweetness. It may be a wonderful experience to go through, now and then, but, to us at least, it would not be healthy to become dependent upon it, or to use it habitually. Such a silence is as different as possible from the free open-air atmosphere to which we are accustomed, with the wind of the Spirit sweeping over us and blowing where it listeth, as it does on a wide moor, or

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rippling over a barley field among the ears of living grain.

Compulsory silence keeps us separate units. We do not get near enough to each other, and to each other's needs, really to grow into one corporate whole. Or, to change the figure, unbroken silence is like liquid metal, glowing and golden it may be. But spoken words (when they are living words from the depths of a living silence) are like the die that stamps the shining gold with the image and superscription of the king. They give us the coin that we can put in our purses and use to feed the hungry. Words spoken in Meeting "under a sense of concern" reach to a different place, because they come from a different place, than most others. They are not easily forgotten. Even if we differ from them intellectually they do not hurt. In a strange way it is possible in Meeting to accept a very different standpoint from one's own with no sense of antagonism. Mrs. Browning says :

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How true it is whene'er we say a true word,  
instantly  
We feel 'tis God's not ours.

And this holds good when we *hear*  
a true word also.

Often in our Quaker Silence the hunger in another soul is, as we say, "opened" to us. Or a message is entrusted to us that may have little or no relation to our present state of mind. It is for this reason that we dare not fix beforehand any subject for meditation. Until we are actually worshipping together we do not know what will be needed. Often we go to Meeting with our minds full of one special line of thought, some subject, possibly, that we may have been studying during the week on its intellectual side. We expect, perhaps we hope, that we may be allowed to share it with others. Then, very often, in the Silence, that subject is, as it were, taken away from us. Tenderly, but also relentlessly, it is put away, removed out of our sight. We have it, and we

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lose it. But in the losing sometimes we almost seem to see the fingers of a Hand taking it away and covering it from us, as children see their nurse's hand putting away some cherished plaything on to a higher shelf till they are ready for it. And then, in our emptiness we are left to a silence that is not empty. For in that silence very often some other message is given. It may be that some long-past travail of our own soul, that we ourselves had almost forgotten, is flashed before us with a vividness and an urgency that cannot be resisted, and that bears fruit at last in unsought words. "I dare not speak except when I dare not keep silence" is the safest Quaker rule. We find practically, that such a message, so given, though the speaker may not know of it at the time, or till long afterwards, perhaps may even never know of it down here, does yet always, sooner or later, reach some hungry soul awaiting it, when it is faithfully delivered.

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On the other hand, if it is disobediently kept back, a sense of deadness and darkness and leanness creeps into a Meeting. We do not know why, but we go away unfed.

Thus our Quaker Silence is not only a surrender; it is also a test; a test of faithfulness, and of life. A dead silence is the deadest of all dead things. Our Meetings for Worship are, as it were, the clinical thermometers of our corporate life. When, instead of being creative and alive they become barren and dead, we know that there must be something wrong with our spiritual health. There is nothing for us to shelter behind. We cannot lay the blame on the preacher or the words; or on the music, for there is none. We know it must be just we ourselves who are in fault, that we have not been living close enough to our Master to be able to discern His voice.

“If we are going our own way six days in the week, it is presumptuous to

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expect that He will guide us miraculously on the seventh.”<sup>1</sup>

There are certain crystals, geologists tell us, that can only come to their perfect form in stillness. This surrendering silence is not a thing that can be taken up for half an hour or an hour or two at a time, and then laid aside. It is, or it ought to be, the whole of life. This does not mean that Friends are content to live in a state of drowsy acquiescence and passivity. On the contrary our danger nowadays, like that of most of our neighbours, is that we often allow ourselves to get over-busy and over-pressed. We live in a round of what our ancestors would have called “creaturely activities.” But through it all we are conscious of a better way. In the Silence at least we have a perpetual reminder that there is another kind of life, a higher plane, if we could but attain to it, on which “action is the most refreshing rest, and rest is in

<sup>1</sup> Pamphlet on *Ministry and our Meetings for Worship*, 1911. •



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some sense the most effective action to the soul that lives in entire dependence upon God," because "all experience comes to be but more and more of the pressure of His life on ours. It comes in this perpetual living of our life in Him."

It is this consciousness of creative growth in silence that develops in our Meetings for Worship. They focus this light centre for us, and remind us of it when it is in danger of being forgotten. Just as we are told that the physical eye was developed in the course of countless ages through a growing sensitiveness to light outside itself, so we feel that new spiritual senses are developing among us as we wait receptively in Silent Fellowship together, learning to taste in our daily life the powers of the real world, the eternal world, within the world we see.

Therefore I walk as one who sees the joy shine  
through  
Of the other life behind our life, as the stars  
behind the blue.

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What those future senses will become, what they may be used hereafter to apprehend, our faculties are still too dim and untrained even to guess, but even now the fact of their existence is sure, and it is itself an assurance of the Unseen. We could disbelieve anything rather than the united guidance that we have known, that has been given to us in the united surrender of our Meetings. Every stage of the process of this silently developing life becomes absorbingly interesting (there is no other word) when once we are willing to forgo our own ideas and plans, both for ourselves and for others, and are content to surrender ourselves to wait and watch unitedly "what God is going to do with us next."

Life grows strangely simple as it centres itself more and more round the one tremendous Thou.

All the minor differences of age, of sex, of position, of intellect, that loom so large in the world outside, with its rigid barriers, become unimportant here.

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They do not disappear, but they become like the varieties of trees and flowers and plants that are all necessary to make up the full beauty of a garden, while, through the silence of that garden, still, as in the beginning, is heard the voice of the Lord God, in the cool of the day.

## CHAPTER VII

### SILENCE DIRECTED OR FREE •

By CYRIL HEPHER

IN the many informal conferences to which the practice of the Fellowship of Silence has given rise, one question recurs again and again. Should the Silence be a silence of entire freedom, each for himself following whatever line of thought opens to him, or should it be a directed silence, a silence, that is to say, in which all agree upon some one subject of thought, or some one common end of prayer. It is here that the Quaker use of the Silence differs most widely from that of the newer lovers of Silence—Theosophists and others. For the Friend the Silence is an absolute

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freedom. In it he seeks to subdue all self-originated movements of the human spirit, in order that he may surrender himself with entire freedom of response to the lightest movement of the Divine Spirit. Particularly is his Silence free to be broken. He would have no rigidity of silence that might impede the speaking out of any message which God might move some soul to utter. Indeed though it would hardly be admitted as a certain proof of the absence of the Spirit were no vocal prayer or message to issue from the silence, yet certainly among Friends speech is regarded as the true end of the Silence, and the most welcome sign of the presence of the Spirit, and without it there would not lack an element of disappointment. Indeed the Quaker would look with grave doubt and anxiety upon a Silence which habitually failed to issue in vocal utterance.

The theosophical folk, on the other hand, with all those who come to the Silence consciously using its psychic

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powers, strongly disapprove of the permission of speech of any kind, save the opening and closing vocal prayer or benediction. The knowledge that the Silence is not at any moment secure against the irruption of speech is for them in itself a disturbing element. They regard spoken prayer or message not as a liberation of the soul, but as a destruction of the psychic and spiritual atmosphere begotten of the Silence and the Fellowship.

For the Quaker the real end of the Silence is speech, for the Theosophist it is the deeper consciousness of the World Ineffable which lies beyond speech. The aim is different.

Nor does the Quaker approach the Silence by the same path. He does not in the least desire that all should be meditating upon the same subject. The Theosophist regards unity of thought as almost essential. The Friend has no interest in the psychological bearings of the Silence. He is entirely un-

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conscious of that side of it. Not so the Theosophist. He has an elaborate scheme of dogmatic psychology into which he fits this corporate silence. He believes that "thought forms emanating from each brain in the circle of Silence need to be in unison if they are to gain strength." As like answers to like, and the harp string vibrates in sympathy if its own note be sounded on another instrument, so thought answers back to thought, brain to brain, spirit to spirit. For this, he declares that a fixed subject of meditation, upon which every person present will concentrate his thought, is of the first importance. Without it, conflict of thought might occur, and the different members of the silent group might hinder rather than help each other. The answer of the Friend is that harmony is better than unison, a richer, more beautiful, more satisfying thing. Souls all desiring to reach God, and all abiding silent unto Him, will not think otherwise than in harmony,

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and the Silence will be the more heavenly for the variety of thought that fills it. The unity of God is not a unison but a chord. Like Abt Vogler,

Out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.<sup>1</sup>

To the Anglican temperament, so far as our experience was an indication of it, as one might perhaps expect, the middle way made the strongest appeal, or as I should prefer to call it, the Catholic way, of including the best of both points of view. Actually in those churches in England, Canada, and America where the Fellowship of Silence has found a foothold, as in the little New Zealand Meeting which gave this devotion to the English Church, the

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the whole passage will make the quotation more intelligible.

And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,  
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but  
a star.

Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is nought ;  
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said :  
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought :  
And, there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider and bow  
the head !

R. BROWNING : " Abt Vogler," vii.



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leaning was to the Quaker Silence in theory, and to the psychologists' Silence in practice. Thus it has become our custom to say before our Silence begins that though we are seeking God in the Silence, and shall be content with silence, yet if there be any, who feels himself, or herself, constrained by the Spirit to vocal utterance, there is entire freedom to speak, provided always that it is under this sense of divine impulse.

But, practically, with us it almost always issues in silence. Nor am I so sure that we have been so free as we thought ourselves of "direction" in our Silences. More particularly at our earlier meetings though without any announced subject, the Presence of God was a very dominating thought. It could scarcely be otherwise, for the silent waiting upon God is in itself so completely a corporate practice of the Presence of God, that, while our Silence was new to us, that thought alone sufficed to fill it.

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In our Northern meetings we found ourselves coming to meditate for the most part after one common plan, and I believe that this acted as a unifying force. Our first division of time we used to devote to the stilling of the body, of the intellect, and of the spirit ; the second, to the still contemplating of some one subject, sometimes reached each for himself, sometimes agreed upon ; the third, to active intercession and entreaty, that so we might send the Divine blessing radiating from our Silent Fellowship far and wide.

I am inclined to think that I interpret our general feeling, when I say that we were tending more and more to the directed Silence in which the central thought for meditation is announced. Yet the present writer looks back with great wonder and delight to the harmonies which filled the less disciplined silence. He would seek to preserve, at least in the central division of the silence time, exactly that old Quaker

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notion of the listener, waiting, like the lad of old, hard by the innermost shrine, if perchance once again he might hear the voice of God calling him.

But there can be little doubt that the definite turning to active intercession and entreaty, in the final section of the time, is a profoundly valuable completion of the Silence. It acts as a preservative against the contamination of self-centredness for a practice which aims at centring the life in God. It links the highest with common things, and is at once something of a relief for those who are beginners in the ways of meditation, and a safeguard of the mystic temperament.

There is room for these and many more aspects of the common Silence, for that Silence, do what we will, is many-coloured as a sunset sky. We are as yet but at the beginning of a science of psychology even of the individual soul; the psychology of fellowship is yet more rudimentary, but we may

surely look forward to new discoveries in that land of prayer, where the mighty masters of the past, mystics and saints of the ages of faith, made their spiritual pilgrimages, as we follow them afar off—alas how very far!—yet with helps which they lacked, not least their own experience as they have handed down to us the tale of it.

It may serve if I describe the path along which we in the English Church, pursuing the Silence, found ourselves being led. It will be seen that it is considerably removed from the Quaker model, as is natural, seeing that we, with our wealth of vocal prayer and our exceeding abundant opportunities of the ministry of preaching, do not need to look to the Silence for these.

Naturally enough, we and they go to the Silence for what we feel we lack: they, to draw everything from the well of silence, all their prayer and preaching: we, thirsting most of all for the water of silence itself. This, I think,

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explains why we are happy, and they are not, when the Silence remains unbroken.

### *The Preparation*

Being assembled, generally at an hour of the late afternoon, 5.30 perhaps, in a Lady-chapel if there was one, if not, sufficiently near each other in the body of the Church to feel our fellowship rather than our isolation, we used, after a brief space for preliminary recollection, to recite the "Our Father" together, with great deliberation and very definite intention. That intention was twofold, first to realize our brotherhood in God's Fatherhood, and secondly that we might be protected under His sure shield against all attack of evil spirits. We recognized that there is peril in all spiritual adventure, but as we said our "Deliver us from evil" in its true sense, viz. the Evil One, and claimed the shelter of Him in Whom is all power, we knew that no evil thing could approach

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to hurt us. With this end we used, some of us, the Sign of the Cross.

This being done the subject of our thought was announced, if it was a week in which the Silence was to be directed, by whoever of us in years or ministry was the "elder," which when priests were present meant the senior priest. His only other task was to begin the *Nunc Dimittis* with which we ended our Silence, and, if a priest, to pronounce the benediction. There leadership ended. Then each as best served him disposed his body so as most readily to forget its existence. Very often, for us of the Church, kneeling was the readiest way, but every one was utterly free to sit, if he found forgetfulness of the body most quickly in that way. Sitting is a natural enough attitude for brooding meditation, and not without symbolic fitness. Then, preparing ourselves by a simple act of confession, we were ready to approach the Silence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes a help towards attaining bodily restful-

### *The Stilling*

First began the stilling of mind and soul. The very activity of the brain may make a man a bad listener, and listening was our goal. The intellect needs to learn how to be still, no less than the body, if it is to concentrate all its powers upon the work of hearing. This bringing of the mind away from its distractions and restlessness to a single and sustained attention to God is the crux of the whole matter. But it is possible to learn this lesson. There are two things which are practically of service. First the recollection of God under some aspect of His boundless immensity. His *greatness*, as the abyss of space interpreted to us by the science of astronomy reveals it. His awful

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ness to breathe deeply a few times at the beginning. When the body is quiescent in sleep a slow deep rhythmic breathing accompanies its repose. And those who suffer from physical restlessness may be advised to try this old and simple help to overcome it. This deep inbreathing is symbolical of that breathing in of the life of God enfolding us more closely than the air.

*sanctity.* His enfolding Being, penetrating the whole visible order with its secret force. His Presence in the soul of man revealed in the Incarnate Life. These are the kind of cosmic thoughts, in themselves casting upon the mind the hush and still wonder which is the avenue to contemplation.

God's greatness lies around our incompleteness,  
Round our restlessness His rest.

Here too it is useful, as we found, to have in mind some quick word of recall, by which the wandering of thought can be instantly and as often as needed brought back to the central purpose. The word "God," not spoken but sounding in the mind, the holy name of Jesus, or "Deus, Deus Meus," form such words of recall.

This preparation may take long. It is worth more than the third of our time which, roughly, we used to assign to it. It is worth persisting in till it has gained its end, till mind and soul are silent unto God.



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### *The Listening*

Thus we pass to the centre of our Silence. The will is at its highest activity. As an insect poised in the air, seemingly motionless, with wings in such rapid motion that they are invisible, is all the while sustained by its resistance to the air, so the will in this listening is not passive. It holds fast to its rest in God by sustained resistance to all that would drag it down, or invade its silence. This is very far from making the mind a blank. It is the filling of the mind with God to the exclusion of all else. Here our Silence differed most profoundly from intellectual meditation. We were not seeking to think. new thoughts, only to hear them. We rested on the belief that God is in His very essence THE WORD. His will is to speak, to reveal, and He has created man to hear and understand. Here always was the fruit of our Silence gathered. Not in words, nor visions,

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nor signs did we look for the communications of God. Thoughts rising spontaneously, movements and stirrings welling up from the depths of the soul, the inner glory of God hidden in the soul of man, emerging, filling the Temple, none of these word images convey what cannot be conveyed. Only we knew God, and we knew that we knew Him. If this sound too bold a claim to make, my excuse must be that to say less would be to belittle the generosity of God.

It was in this division of the Silence that our chosen subject, if we had one, was before our minds. It matters little after all whether the silence be directed or free, what is vital is the common desire animating each person present to be attentive to the Divine Word. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." I do not think that we are ourselves always the judges of the values of the message we receive, or that it is our wisdom to look for, and to assess, our results. No one can so intently place

himself under the direct influence of God, desiring nothing but to be guided, moulded, and penetrated by God, without being profoundly influenced not only at the moment but in the judgments and decisions he makes afterwards, even when he believes himself to be using only his own thought-power. No one, I am certain, can thus deliberately open the windows of his soul towards heaven, after this fashion, but his whole spiritual nature will develop under its influence. There are, undoubtedly, some temperaments to whom this still listening is unsuited. There is no reason why they should not fill this central division of the Silence with active intellectual meditation. They will not think the less clearly if they have been at pains to use well such a method of "stilling" as I have described. Nor will their meditation disturb the listening silence of the rest. The Silence is not the poorer for being many-coloured.

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### *The Outpouring*

The third and last division, to my thinking the crown of all, but owing its power to what has gone before, is the active outpouring of the soul's devotion before the throne of God. It is now that the soul pours forth all its love and adoration.

Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation;  
A Light to lighten the Gentiles,  
And the glory of Thy People Israel.

God has revealed Himself in the Silence, and we must not be disobedient to the heavenly vision. Aspiration and longing are now focussed into the resolution of the will. With all its powers awake, the soul surrenders itself without reserve into the hands of God. The prayer of the affections blends with the prayer of the will.

Now, again, out of the depths of the Divine Being that we have been contemplating, we draw for our need, or for the necessities of those for whom we

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desire to intercede, for this is the time for intercession. With the heart full of the thought of God in His infinite resource, or realizing in some new way some aspect of His beauty or power, the soul pours out its petition, for friend, or church, or world, at the throne of grace.

Human need and its divine supply meet in the soul which has passed rightly through the "stilling" and the "listening." Here is a defence against spiritual self-centredness or selfishness. It is something bigger than spiritual development that is our end. From the circle of Silence radiate waves of spiritual power. This makes the Silent Meeting capable of definite use to definite ends. It is the very quintessence of fellowship, and a true *sursum corda*, in which the desire of the heart and the thought of the mind are lifted into the atmosphere of the presence of God.

I may conclude this chapter by setting down seven different uses of this Silence, all of them precious.

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1. *The true "Quaker Meeting"* : silence used as the prelude to ministry whether of vocal prayer or preaching.

2. *Free Silence* : *i.e.* silence maintained, but without any subject of common thought or prayer.

3. *Directed Silence* : *i.e.* silence maintained, but with a subject announced on which all meditate.

4. *Silent intercession* : in which meditation leads directly to united prayer in silence for one common object.

5. *Half-silent meetings* : in which the time is equally divided between vocal prayer and silence. Such meetings I found established at Boston, U.S.A.

6. *Sacramental Silence* : in which while the Priest continues the sacramental action, *e.g.* making his own Communion, the faithful present adore in silence. In this way silence has been rooted from the most remote ages in the life of the Catholic Church as a part of its highest worship. This lingers in our own

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Ordination service, and is almost universally required by Bishops in their Confirmations, and is being increasingly used by wise priests at solemn celebrations of the Holy Mysteries.

7. *Brief intervals of silence* : such as those used in the Pan-Anglican and Edinburgh Conferences, and prescribed in the intercessions officially issued for use during the War.

In all of these the essential principle of the Fellowship of Silence is used. In the last, which is most adaptable to great numbers, its power can be felt, and felt quickly, reinforced by the impressiveness of humanity in the mass. But the first three of the above-named silences are in my judgment the most precious, not merely because they are independent of numbers, but because their heavenly length makes it possible to do more than cross the frontiers of the world invisible.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DIFFICULTIES AND ERRORS

By CYRIL HEPHER

It must not be imagined that there are no difficulties in the pathway of Silence. It would be a poor recommendation to suggest such a thing. On the threshold stands the need of perseverance. It is not every one, it is not even the majority of those who begin, who will persevere. I have said elsewhere that the fellowship which the corporate Silence offers is a powerful assistance to perseverance. That does not mean that it removes the difficulty. The freshness and novelty of the sense of the spiritual must wear off. To those, however, who are true lovers of the unseen world, the times,



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which will come, and come again, without the moving sense of a rare experience, are worth while, infinitely worth while, though they be many, for the sake of that stirring of the pool of silence by a greater than an angel Visitant, which returns only as and when He will. After all, rare experiences cannot be frequent, and to set out to seek a spiritual experience is not the way to find what you are seeking. I have found very often, and always to my surprise, that despite innumerable cautions and warnings, I can never tell the tale of our Silent Fellowship without conveying the sense to some one or other of my hearers that we are looking for supernatural happenings, for voices or visions or revelations. If that was the aim I would never again unite in the Fellowship of Silence. But all such ideas are soon removed by the testing of experience. It is only the beginner who complains that "nothing happened." It is only those who are content to desire nothing

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but God Himself who will quietly persevere. It is infinitely fortunate for those who use this Silence that its very simplicity preserves its health. There is nothing in it to foster spiritual pride. I confess to a great fear of the very word Contemplation being used of our silence. With much talk of mysticism in the air, and much examination of the souls of holy saints under the psychical microscope, and much speech in our ears of such matters as the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive way, there is no small peril lest we who are children learn the speech of the giants before we know the first rudiments of the grammar of their saintly science. I take comfort to think of the words of good Fr. Augustine Baker, who, speaking of interior silence in prayer, and of the preparation of the soul for it, says: "That was an excellent preparation which the good, simple, devout, old woman is said to use, who, when she set herself to devotions in the church, said only, 'O

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my God, let that come to Thee which I wish, and that befall me which Thou desirest'; and having said this, presently with a belief of God's presence, she abandoned herself into God's hands, remaining in this silent busy idleness and negative knowledge, more full of fervour and light than all the speculations of the schools or studious meditations of the cloisters. Now, whereas the author commends this exercise, confidently affirming that any one may securely begin with it, even at the first entrance into a spiritual course, as many have done with great and speedy profit, I conceive that in such cases there will be need of more than ordinary courage in beginners to prosecute it." <sup>1</sup> Father Baker was speaking of the prayer of silent listening, as practised in solitude, not of a Fellowship of Silence. Fellowship is ever the antidote of fear, and the mother of good courage. I find here, therefore, counsel which gives us en-

<sup>1</sup> *Holy Wisdom*, Augustine Baker, § iii. chap. 8.

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couragement and modesty at the same time. There is nothing in our practice which any "good devout old woman" might not do, nor any child in things spiritual might not begin upon. Though he tells us not to be surprised, if sometimes we grow suspicious that most of our recollections are fruitless idleness, and so we be apt to fall into doubts, and betake ourselves to unquiet consultations with others. "But if," he continues, "they can avoid this, and resolutely go on, notwithstanding those discouragements, no doubt they will reap great and inestimable benefits by it."<sup>1</sup>

We shall carefully guard ourselves therefore against high thinking concerning our simple practice. To use it, and to profit by it does not mean that we are walking on the heights of prayer. Being in this mind we shall also be pro-

<sup>1</sup> Father Baker was ordained priest in Rheims in 1619, in his forty-fifth year. An Englishman and an Oxford man, he spent sometimes eleven hours of the day in prayer. When he died after much journeying in England, and many persecutions, George Fox was seventeen years old.

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tected against easy discouragement. Difficulty will only send us back to more humble confessions.

Another difficulty is created if once we allow ourselves to discuss together afterwards the experiences of the Silence. It is fatal to its integrity, and save for some quite clear and imperative reason must be rigidly excluded. Deep as is the fellowship of our Silence, yet nevertheless that which in the secrecy is whispered by God to the soul, ought to remain secret, unless charity, or clear need, demand that it be spoken of.<sup>1</sup>

Of errors in the use of Silence I conceive that the chief is to overestimate its value. There is silence in heaven, but heaven is not all silence, nor chiefly silence. It was silence by the space of half an hour. It is inconceivable to me that it can be right or wise to make silence the basis of all worship or ministry. That is to make a demand on human

<sup>1</sup> I do not here refer to the speaking out of message or prayer while the meeting is in progress.

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nature which it is unable to sustain. Again, if all vocal ministry, whether of prayer or preaching, be required to spring out of the silence of the assembly, that degrades diligent preparation to the level of unworthy subterfuge. I am far from believing that Silence is equally useful for all sorts and conditions of men, except in very slender instalments. But that error is in no great likelihood of beguiling us, for even the Society of Friends, those true hereditary lovers of Silence, is more likely, I think, to relax rather than to increase its insistence on Silence as the basis of all ministry and all common prayer. But as an auxiliary to other ministries, and as a form of fellowship accessible for such as love it, it would be difficult to overvalue it.

Our brethren of the Roman Church are not ignorant of the value of the common silence. Low Mass, as it is commonly said in the Roman Catholic Church to-day, is as still as a Quaker Meeting, more still; save for the low murmur of

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the Latin, fading away into silence, and the occasional tinkle of a bell, or a server's voice making an inaudible response, deep silence reigns. That is no small part of its attraction and power. It is, too, a directed silence; the mighty thoughts of God rise before the mind, brought forward not in words but in the unspoken language of ancient gesture. The supreme cosmic conceptions of God in His transcendent Being and awful holiness, of the amazing condescension of His flesh-taking in the womb of Mary, of His self-oblation upon the Tree, and of the miracle of miracles whereby He makes the soul of Man His tabernacle, rise before the silent soul in the sublime processional of enshrined revelation.

High Mass, too, consecrating to adoration the wealth of music, the organ's thunder, the trumpet's blare, the shimmer of strings, and the roll of drums, yet is at moments hushed to a depth of silence more poignant and intense by

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contrast with what goes before and after. Too often among ourselves and in Non-conformity, save and except the Quakers, there exists a very terror of silence. We have yielded inch by inch to encroaching choristers and extemporizing organists, till now should silence intervene but for the briefest space, our people look up alarmed, convinced that the silence spells break-down. Perhaps should this book of ours win its way at all, some ground may yet be rewon from the invaders of silence, and anxious clergy may cease to fill all the spaces which precede their own entrance or exit, or the transitions from one section of the service to another with a plethora of hymns, or musical iniquity of stop-gap improvizations. Silence is not a gap to be filled. It is the greatest of all preparations and the climax of all adoration. Not that the writer believes that liturgy is meant to be inaudible, or that the profoundest worship is so reached. That is not his experience when con-



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trasting masses at which he has assisted when on holiday abroad with the appeal of the rites of his own church worthily ministered at home. A dead language may as well be buried in silence for the simple folk who can only guess at its significance. The suggestion of mighty thoughts of God in a poetic and symbolical ceremonial, albeit serving to indicate even to a child the broad outline of the movement of the service, is not to be compared to the priceless treasure of a vernacular liturgy, if that liturgy be given a reasonable chance of appeal. The Anglican tradition, as Bishop Andrewes' Prayers indicate, had its own still moments. Following the Consecration of the Elements the Priest is left in utter freedom, a most blessed liberty, for the private devotion which precedes and surrounds his own Communion. For himself, here is the still silence in which, without words, if he will, he may offer his adoration and entreaty. For his people, a like silence to his own has here

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by long tradition its own place, making the mighty liturgic speech, preceding and following, the more eloquent and moving by contrast. To get back that traditional liberty of silence from its raiders, be they hurrying priests or over-assertive musicians, would be a noble rescue.

Thus should we escape the second error of undervaluing silence. There are indeed in the English Church hundreds who have learned the value of silence in Retreats. It is a very different use of Silent Fellowship this, but of wonderful beauty and power. As day follows day in silence, so surely and steadily does the blessing of silence unfold. All the proportions of life change in the silence. The things of time shrink in scale by the side of things eternal. Few indeed are the Retreat Conductors whose addresses are so moving as this stillness; few also are their addresses, which in the silence are found to be without hid treasure. Only those who have never tried the

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experience' of a Retreat will speak of this silence as artificial or unnatural. It is the endless chatter of needless talk that strikes the man who has just come from Retreat as artificial and unnatural. No movement is, I think, fuller of promise than that which lately arose in Belgium handing on to working men the privilege of Retreats. That movement has quickly spread to England. Happily the international press has begun to undermine the tower of Babel, and we are beginning to lose our insular prejudice against learning anything from anybody else. But in those long silences which follow the addresses, there is room for a more united silence, such as this book describes, than is reached by the mere presence of men in one place, all meditating, each for himself, without any deliberate effort to use their fellowship in any conscious and purposeful way. If on the last day of the Retreat there might be one such exploration of the potentialities of the Fellowship of

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Silence, there would be, I am persuaded, no small enrichment of the blessings of these retired hours, nay the very crown of them; the last morning's Communion might unfold yet greater depths of its mystery of fellowship.

## CHAPTER IX

### SILENCE AND SACRAMENTS

By CYRIL HEPHER

THOSE who have followed so far the pages of this book with any degree of sympathy with the practice of Silent Fellowship which they advocate will not be surprised to find that as we of the Church give our tribute to the power of Silence, some word must be added to guard ourselves against any appearance, however slight, of diminishing the unique and sovereign place of the Sacraments, which Our Lord in His goodness has bequeathed to His Church, with His gift of the Pentecostal Spirit. To us of the Church who write in this book they are the very

crown and climax of all our approach to God; the High Altar of our worship, completing and vitalizing all the rest. In their strength we live, and in their grace we hope to die. They are dear to us not only as the ordinances of Our Lord's Will, but as the closest and tenderest links with Himself. In them we find an extended Incarnation of His Presence, in which, here in our own world, and with our whole nature, not excluding even the poor body, we may grip Him with all our being, and feel, in and through and beyond their earthly touch, the Ineffable Spirit of Our God penetrating, through and through, our humanity. The touch of the hand of Our Lord cleansed the leper, and to us the Sacraments are equally the contact with Life at its source through the touch of His Spiritual Body. I have written of the Silent Fellowship of prayer as a discovery of hidden treasure, and so truly it is, a very precious path to the Presence of God, a true using of the

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latent virtues that God has planted in our nature, which fellowship and silence reveal. This law of fellowship is the very basis of the sacraments. There is not one which is not either a beginning, or a deepening, or a restoring of fellowship. The crown of all sacraments is *par excellence* the Sacrament of Fellowship. Holy Communion is Holy Fellowship, uniting, as pure fellowship always unites, man to his God and to his fellows. Holy Baptism is the entrance into, and Confirmation the enfranchising within the Catholic Church, which is Christ's Body in that its many members are one Fellowship in Him. The Absolution of the penitent is his restoration to the Fellowship from which his sin has separated him, and we have been taught to value the Apostolic Ministry as the historic backbone of unity which is visible fellowship. Bred, therefore, as we are in sacraments, and lovers of them as by God's good grace we abide, and will abide to our life's end,

is it to be wondered at that all fellowship attracts us, and especially that Silent Fellowship which opens to us doors of fellowship with those who love Our Lord, but do not see our vision of the Tabernacle that He has pitched among men; doors through which, across great gulfs still fixed, our spirits may go out to them and theirs come to us. The Lord of the Church in the Upper Room prayed against divisions before divisions came. Not one but is His wound. In her heart His Church yet dreams with great longing and prayer, *ut omnes unum sint*, and she whispers that prayer in every Eucharist. Such a way to reunion is this prayer of Silence, where we and those who yet are separated from us can meet, not merely physically, but spiritually in the prayer that unites, without betrayal of truth as they know it, those who cannot see eye to eye.

To us sacraments are not merely a way to God, they are *the* way. To the



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Quaker they are no way at all, but outward ordinances and nothing more. Here in this book is a token of the power of Silence. We, who when we write and speak profess the widest divergence, tell you how the prayer of Silence brought to us a unity, not of the intellect but of the heart and spirit. Our thoughts and our beliefs were diverse, but our prayer was one. How else save in silence could we have reached so far along our separate but converging paths towards the centre? What is the origin of this peculiar denial of sacraments, which is so characteristic of Quakerism? To neglect, to esteem lightly and virtually to disregard sacraments, is by no means uncommon in Nonconformity in England, and its Empire-wide extensions. Quakerism alone so utterly rejects them. We must go back to George Fox to answer that question. George Fox was a born leader of souls. The flame of religious ardour which burned in him, and the intense con-

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viction and spiritual power with which he spoke, would in any age have made him great. He was born in a generation of revolutions and upheavals, both political and spiritual. Confusion and unrest, war and reformatations, give to great spirits a power which, when life is calmer, they might not attain. Fox drew to himself a multitude of noble souls, attracted to him by that which they shared with him, the sense of spiritual realities, and the consciousness of the guiding Spirit. The Spirit of God was abroad in the land. There was movement in the air. Fox appeared like a prophet. Authorities were falling into disregard all around. The Church for many minds had lost her prestige, and the Bible was yet new as a court of infallible appeal. Democracy was still in its cradle, but the moment was favourable. The Light of God in the soul, directly guiding the children of God, what need of higher authority than that ! This gospel made a profound appeal, and

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it appealed most strongly to those who were most conscious of Spirit-guidance, or who had cast loose from old moorings of Church authority. But if Quakerism was born of the Spirit, it was nevertheless born into the world. Fox was more the product of his own environment than he thought, and his Society bears to this day the marks of the age which saw its birth. His own conversion was a reaction from religion as he had seen it in the church of his day.

Genius is more often than not in opposition. It advances by destroying. It feels with vivid intuition the lack of that life which is thrilling in itself. But the very urgency of its emotional endowment and the vigour of its own life-pulses may obscure the judgment that it passes on the causes of the world's decrepitude. Fox flung himself against the great ecclesiastical organisation that faced him. The world lacked true religion, the Church was responsible for

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that, therefore the Church's ways must be wrong. Little help had he found in Church or priest.<sup>1</sup> So he goes to the "steeple-houses" to deliver his soul and proclaim a better gospel. For him the day had dawned. The Light had come. His soul was bathed in the radiance of the Other World. ' God was in him and he knew it. He had realized the Immanence of God. He had gotten a new knowledge of God ; a new revelation of Christ and the Spirit. " One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." The very bigness of his own experience made him assume that his was the only way. All other modes of approach were barren. He owed nothing to externals, therefore no one else could. The supremacy of the Spirit, the infallibility of the Inner Light were enough for him. They lifted him above the idolatry of the written Word. He was his own Bible

<sup>1</sup> The " priests " from whom he had sought help were mostly Presbyterian occupants of Church benefices.

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and his own Church, for he found within himself an authority, to him, higher than either.

To a degree which is a marvellous tribute to his genius, he is still followed by the Society he founded, even in his limitations. All great spiritual movements begin thus. They rest on a tremendous individual experience. But not every great personal experience creates a movement. It is necessary that it shall be the true child of its own age and environment, and thus supply their demand. The age of George Fox thirsted for spiritual reality. He had found it. Men on all sides were ready to find it as he had. The dales of Yorkshire, and the hills of lake-land, not less than the towns of the Midlands, had men in them ready to rejoice in the touch of the spiritual, ready to respond to the movement of the Spirit. See him then arriving on horseback at some farmstead in the hills, or may be at a country squire's hall: for all his rejection of

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external aid owing worlds to it. Clad in leather like the Tishbite, what matter that he chose it for hard wear, its significance was quite other. It served him as a friar's cassock served the friar. It struck the note of austere reality. The burning eye, the personality radiating magnetic force, compel men.<sup>o</sup> He gathers them presently into that silence of unified purpose. We can still perceive its psychic powers, its spiritual possibilities, as he leads them, novices though they be, into the inner chambers of their being. From his own tremendous spiritual activity the thought-waves pass from brain to brain. The Spirit descends upon souls tuned to perceive His advent. The story of these early silent meetings is more marvellous than miracle. On one occasion Fox was silent with the people by the space of two hours. Is it any wonder that such a leader could lead where he would? Even that man of iron, the Protector Noll, when he sends for Fox to rebuke

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him, is moved to admiration and is almost his disciple. Quickly it all crystallized into a system emphasizing such tremendous realities, realities so long forgotten that it is no wonder if mistakes in such a company passed for truth. Here it is, the wonder of wonders, God speaks within the soul, as the Guide and Arbiter of life. He is the Inner Light of every man. Man needs but to be still to hear His Voice, or to open the soul's eyes and he may behold Light. Hence grows a splendid perception of human equality and brotherhood, and the denunciation of bloodshed and war. Hence, too, a system of worship the keynote of which lay in the elimination of all outward aids and replacing these by waiting upon the Spirit. It was a logical system up to a point. If the Inner Light is supreme then every man was his own priest. He therefore discarded ministry, though in truth he was himself one of Nature's priests, and about to become a very arch-priest to generations of his followers.

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If all men are indwelt of God then rank disappears; hence away with all titles of honour. If the Light is to be sought within, then all that is external fights against it, so, like the modern Christian Scientist and New Thought folk, he preferred, and in their bare Meeting Houses Quakers attained, a worship place, where, as far as can be, all distraction of form, colour, or movement is eliminated. Sacraments fell under this condemnation, and so despite the New Testament they too went. The very emptiness of all external suggestion was to symbolize and preach the Unseen Spirit. Then comes the wonder. He flies from the external and the sacramental into two new outward ordinances which grew under his general teaching and practice rather than were invented, the outward signs of the "plain speech" and the "plain dress," destined to become for a couple of hundred years or more, as outward signs always do, a powerful bond of



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union among the Friends, and a subtle and satisfying joy. How Quakers grew to love them, and what sufferings they nobly bore for the signs of the Dress and the Speech ! And what noble ideas they signified. The one, brotherhood and equality in God, and the other, modesty, simplicity, and a half-ascetic austerity. How long they lingered, and what a pity that only a private use of one remains, and none at all of the other ! All that was best in Puritanism was in those two outward ordinances, and who shall say they lacked either the beauty which always follows purity and simplicity, or an appeal all their own to the better self of all who saw them. Society is the poorer for their loss. I had liefer see Quaker Grey than the Salvation Army Red, but for that, too, I am not unthankful, for its presence in the streets never will allow us to forget the submerged humanity that it serves. But to me it seems impossible to deny that it is the revenge of the rejected

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sacraments, that those who in an age of reaction cast off outward rites, which could claim the authority of Christ and His Gospel, found themselves the inventors of new ordinances which were sacramental in all but the conveying of divinely pledged grace to the soul. It is not possible to eliminate the play of outward things upon the spirit. God put us in a world of beauty because He loved our souls. He created the human face that we might see and understand what words could never say. We think of the glance that Jesus cast on Peter, and wonder that lovers of Jesus can still think that an ordinance is a poorer thing, or the less spiritual, because, like the Son of God when He came to earth, it expresses externally the deep things of the Spirit, and dares even to find the very Life of God interpenetrating the elements of earth. As in this book with beautiful generosity our "Friends" have opened to us their treasures, so we, too, in return would show to them our riches,

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for we have gold and incense and myrrh  
to give them in the sacraments which  
enshrine our homage to our King, our  
adoration of our Eternal Priest, and  
the healing of the soul's deepest wounds.

## CHAPTER X

### OUTWARD SIGNS AND INWARD LIGHT

By PERCY DEARMER

CHRISTIANITY, we Catholics say, is a sacramental religion. Our religious existence has been bound up with those holy awful mysteries that are the effectual signs, the unfailing channels of inward and spiritual grace. Our lives are centred about the altar; our whole system of teaching, as we have it from that best of religious manuals, the Church Catechism, is based upon the fact of Baptism.

But, if we are sincere and honest thinkers, we are bound to be confronted with the problem that there are other Christians who would repudiate even

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the name of Sacramentalist, and some indeed who have no Sacraments at all, or at least seem to have none. This is the problem towards which the following pages are contributed. How can we answer it? We know that to answer it by denying the grace of those Christians who are unbaptized or non-communicant is no answer. It is indeed one of those lies which sometimes make the outside world doubt our sincerity altogether. We know that there are many Christians without Sacraments who are better than we; and if to deny this is to be untrue, to shirk the question is also to be unfaithful to the truth. We must face it; and only by facing it can we be really loyal to the sacramental position itself.

But, again, to attempt to meet the difficulty by belittling the Sacraments, or discarding them, would be equally unfaithful to the truth. The Christian Church has, as a matter of historical fact, been sacramental from the beginning;

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and the unsacramental Christians have been a minority formed in a period of abnormal and exaggerated reaction, and so comparatively small as to be of little account side by side with the vast multitudes who have always, and in a huge and probably increasing majority still do cling to the Sacraments. Even if we had not our own spiritual experience to go upon, we should still have that of nearly all the saints and heroes who have left their mark upon the past, as of all the common Christian people for a millennium and a half, and of most at the present moment. Sacramentalism is a fact. We can hardly imagine Christianity without it. We are justified in saying that unsacramental Christianity is not the type, but something abnormal. It was the Catholic system that held on through the ages of persecution, and established Christianity on the ruins of the Roman Empire, that tamed the barbarians and brought religion through the chaos of the dark

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ages, that touched with gold the struggles of the Middle Ages, that was the missionary of a world inconceivably difficult, and converted the ancestors of us all, Catholic or Protestant alike ; it is Sacramentalism that is the mother of us all, as much in the East as in the West—for in this matter there is no difference—in the mountains of Greece, the ancient cities of Italy, the steppes of Russia, or the meadows of England. Other systems have existed in a small way and done well, but this system it is that has borne the burden and heat of the day, that has carried the people in her bosom, and brought the most diverse nations, savage and civilized, to Christ.

Christianity, then, we have some right to say, is a sacramental religion ; and, furthermore, in saying this we find room for certain central streams of modern thought, which the common English religion of preceding generations came near to excluding altogether. The modern world is insistent upon beauty,

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and 'upon the various forms of art which endeavour to speak through it; here is one thing upon which intellectual people 'are agreed,—if it is not “in ganzen, guten, schönen, resolut zu leben,” it at least imagines itself to be so resolved. Again, all that is best in the world is becoming agreed as to 'the supreme need of that duty to our neighbour which is described as social service. If then religion is to mean anything to-day, it must at least include art and philanthropy in its philosophy. But, further, there is a growing demand—partly due to that practical spirit which is a modern symptom, partly due to the immense strides of natural science, and partly also to the desire for experimental verification because science has taught men to ask for a “sign”—a demand that the spiritual benefits of religion shall show their power upon the physical organism.

The principle of Sacramentalism supplies the ground upon which these things



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have their life, their use, and their philosophical explanation. It also explains that growing tendency to restore the methods of worship and the externals of religious devotion on traditional and what are called "Catholic" lines, a tendency which is perhaps most significantly illustrated by the Catholic and sacramental leanings of the latest and least orthodox movement of all—that which has adopted the name of the New Theology. A few years ago the very word "Sacramentalism" was so suspect as to be capable of being used as a term of abuse. But now, among those who are making the thought and action of the world, the old need is felt again. The need is felt; and the Church brings forth from her treasure-house things new and old. In this case it is something very old indeed; for Christianity itself is nothing but the manifestation of the Word in flesh, the Incarnation of the invisible Son of God in the outward and visible manhood of Jesus Christ.

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It is, however, obvious at once that this reconciliation which comes so naturally in the more historic forms of Christianity—this Sacramentalism which more than aught else has prevented the Modernists of the Roman Catholic Church from breaking with the Church altogether—is not yet recognized by the world at large. It still makes but scant appeal to the masses of the English people; and from the intellectual agnostics or indifferentists—especially from the writers of fiction who hold the first place in the education of the modern public—it evokes at most a faint sentimental response, or it just escapes the contempt which is persistently showered upon other forms of religion. At the same time, the two great popular new “Churches,” which compel our attention by reason at least of their power, their wide distribution, and their rapid growth to great numerical importance—the Salvation Army and the Christian Scientists—though they are actively

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engaged, and by very different ways, in proving the outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, have never consciously entertained the thought of Sacraments at all.

Nor are they the first to make this crucial omission. We cannot raise the question for an instant without remembering that a remarkable Christian community has existed in our midst for two centuries and a half without Sacraments—the Society of Friends.

These latter are, in the opinion of Dr. Inge, the exception which may prove a rule. "Many have begun by saying," he remarks, "the heart, the motive is all, the external act nothing; the spirit is all, the letter nothing. . . . And so on. The descent to Avernus is easy by this road. Perhaps no sect that has professed contempt for all ceremonial forms has escaped at least the imputation of scandalous licentiousness, with the honourable exception of the Quakers."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Mysticism*, p. 259.

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But the Quakers are more than an honourable exception. They are a body whose history conclusively proves the *possibility* of living the Christian life without Sacraments, and of living a life astonishingly above the level of Christianity at large. The other sects were probably not able to try the experiment under fair conditions: they were ignorant, wild, reactionary, and stained with heresy and with anarchic tendencies. The Quakers rapidly overcame the tendency to extravagance, retained the ancient orthodoxy of the great Councils, and have existed without Sacraments. Their existence has proved, not that they were right in that, or in all their peculiarities, but that such existence is possible.

And it has been more than mere existence. In the later seventeenth century, when licence was the fashion, the Friends showed the example of a purity and soberness of life which had perhaps never been realized before outside a

monastery, and not always within one. In the eighteenth century, when the thought of Christendom receded furthest from Christ, they continued to remain near the person of their Master and faithful to his mind.

They, true to their great belief in the inner light, sought earnestly to replenish their lamps, though not through Sacraments. They were "enthusiasts,"<sup>1</sup> in the primary sense of that noble name, at a time when every accredited leader of religion denounced enthusiasm as if there were no other danger in the world, and denounced also the good works which naturally sprang from it.<sup>1</sup> They concentrated themselves upon the Holy Ghost—regarding all external things as obstacles to their purpose—and as a result they received an inspiration which led them out of the errors of their time.

We cannot pass them over as a mere

<sup>1</sup> As when Dr. Trapp, from his pulpit at Christ Church, Newgate Street, denounced the "enthusiasm" of Whitefield *because he visited the prisoners in Newgate!*

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exception. It is an exception which we must face : it is like one of those unexpected happenings in scientific experiment which obstinately vitiate a whole hypothesis. If we are to know the prophets by their fruits, if it be true that the power to discern the signs of the times is a test of the Christlike character, then these men were indeed inspired. They reached, in a most uncongenial age, the position which the best minds in Christendom are reaching to-day ; they broke the seals of the book which we are even now unrolling.

Examples crowd upon us. In their very manner of worship, the Quakers forestalled the discoveries of the new Psychology. And that silent concentration of theirs exactly discovered and met the central weakness of Protestantism, which is still with us—the sacerdotalism that has led men to think that the rays of God's light can only reach the human heart through the distorted medium of a human preacher. They re-dis-

covered indeed, without knowing it, that element of spiritual concentration which before the Reformation had taken the form of hearing Mass, and which before the Reformation, strangely enough, had taken also the form (even amongst the devout laity) of neglecting Communion—except on the one day in the year when the law of the Church compelled it.

In their theology, again, the Quakers established themselves in an ark which has enabled them to ride easily over the rough waters of modern criticism ; they escaped the impossible theories of their day upon inspiration (perhaps because they knew so well what inspiration really was) ; intensely orthodox about God and his Christ, they yet forestalled us in our recently acquired instinct of avoiding over-definition. They settled at the outset the problem now raised in the feminist movement, by allowing women a place by the side of men in their worship. Small as they were, and ex-

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cluded by law from Parliament, from the professions, and from all public work, they yet have been the pioneers of political and social reform, from the Emancipation of the Slaves to the establishment of Garden Cities. And how much lies between ! How much is associated with the names of Woolman, Elizabeth Fry, John Bright, and with the familiar patronymics of the great Quaker families who, excluded from the professions, took to trade, and proved that the more Christian a business was the better it succeeded. These meek men—and in the matter of war it may almost be said that we are all Quakers now<sup>1</sup>—did indeed inherit the earth ;

<sup>1</sup> I think this has been shown very clearly during the present great war. All the nations engaged lament the fact that they have been dragged into war ; all believe that they are fighting for peace , the people of all, including Germany, honestly believe that war was forced upon their peace-loving rulers by unscrupulous foes. A century ago this was not at all the way war was regarded. The very fact that people are everywhere saying that Christianity has broken down is significant. No one thought it had broken down during the Napoleonic wars. As a matter of fact people realize now as they never did before that Christianity means peace on earth and goodwill. This



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these simple men sought first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the treasures of Solomon were added unto them. We preach to-day as our message to the modern world many things which they declared two centuries ago; yet in this we are still behind—in the great central matter of establishing trade upon the principles of Christ.

They forestalled the future. If that is not a proof of peculiar inspiration, then what is? And they sought first the Kingdom of God. Yet in the opinion of many they did not belong to that Kingdom at all. Technically, they were not Christians, because they were not baptized. Technically, even those who happened to have been born and baptized in some other Church were yet excommunicate, because they never made their Communion.

Here is the position to be faced. And the only answer is that the technical

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war, we are all saying, is a war against war, and that is its main justification in the eyes of Europe and America.

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theology of those who make this assertion (and they are many) is not true because it will not contain the facts. Theologians indeed are ready with a distinction, and acknowledge that God is not bound by the Sacraments; but the real danger to the Church and to religion lies in the fact that plain men forget distinctions, and plain clergymen often preach the Sacraments, year in and year out, as if they admitted of no exceptions, as if they were the end and not the means of religion.

We need something more generous than a grudging admission that God is not bound by the Sacraments, something more fundamental. And, as always, we find it in the New Testament. As always, we find there the corrective (would that one could always say the preventive) of the inherent dangers of ecclesiasticism, in that broad spirit of the Gospel, which is due, not to vagueness or indifference, but to the final grasp of Christ upon the essential

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realities. So it is that when we hear it said that a man is damned, unless he be orthodox, we remember One who said, "He that is not against us is for us"; when we are told that it is mortal sin to fail in certain observances on Sundays or Holy Days, we remember that the Master declared that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, and that a great disciple said, "One man esteemeth one day above another : another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind." When we are told that a man cannot be a Christian unless he is baptized, we look at the Cross, and by its side we see the figure of a thief who repented. When we are tempted to suppose that a man cannot follow Christ unless he be a communicant, we look at One riding upon an ass among the waving palm-branches, and behind him eleven faithful men who head the endless procession of those that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

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No grudging admission of them that do mighty works in his Name need come from us, but rather a joyful gratitude that the ways of God are better than our ways. When the Church forgot, and the sword of the Spirit rusted while she ornamented the scabbard, God taught her sharply that the scabbard might be thrown away in time of battle. When men taught that those Christians, who did not enjoy the advantages of the ministrations of a sixteenth-century bishop, were in sin and were no part of the Church at all, God proved the opposite through a line of saints and heroes. And in regard to Creeds and Sacraments, God has also taught us that men can enjoy singular gifts of the Holy Ghost while honestly foregoing the regular means of grace, so long as they cling to the Christ and bring forth the fruits of well-doing.

God has taught us this because he has allowed men—or has indeed led them—to make the experiment. And the

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lesson, after all, pervades the whole New Testament.

Orthodoxy is not a banner to be flaunted in the facile hands of those who most readily swallow articles and bolt confessions, but something to be sought with pains by such as climb, and that hardly, to eternal life. It is for this reason that the Church when she has seemed most orthodox on the surface has sometimes been least orthodox in the solid. She has, for instance, been strict about the duty to God while becoming absolutely heretical about that other half of the Christian religion which is concerned with our Neighbour. Indeed, even in her strictest moods about ecclesiastical order, her very orthodoxy has been strangely incomplete ; and we may ask ourselves the question, " Would S. John have been more shocked at the Methodists for discarding the order of bishops or at the historic Church for dispensing with the order of prophets ? "

Yet she has got along somehow in her

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maimed condition. She has got along also somehow in England without the ministry of healing; although S. Paul might have been almost as surprised at that omission as at the Quaker's omission of other outward signs of grace. She has got along, not without great losses: because she had so much that is essential.

Perhaps that is the reason why the separated bodies, starting with so few advantages, have yet brought forth such wonderful fruits of the Spirit. They often had that which is vital, which is central. They lost what was good, but sometimes they won what was better. Some, for instance, lost episcopacy, but won freedom; some lost Sacraments but won the Holy Ghost; some lost priests and won prophets.

The thoughtful sacramentalist will recognize the possibility of this: just because he believes in the reality of the means of grace, he knows how ineffably great is the Spirit of Christ which they bring to us. There are indeed formalists

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in the Catholic as in all religions ; and in its worst state such formalism may virtually deny the Spirit in its eagerness to affirm the Sacraments ; but the true Catholic will not fall into the error of minimizing one part of the truth in order to emphasize the other. The immense harm that was done to Christendom by the revolt against episcopacy will not, for instance, blind him to the fact that evils had gathered about Church order which, in the providence of God, it would seem, could (as the world then was) be removed in no other way.

None are perfect, and it is God's will that each tree should be known by its own fruit. If the old Jerusalem brings forth corrupt fruit, then God can raise up new sons of the Kingdom out of the very stones. Nor does either history or the New Testament lead us to suppose that God shares our human dread of innovation. He makes all things new. Much that is precious may be lost in the process ; but then God looks to the essentials ; and,

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again, it is better to enter the Kingdom halt and maimed than not to enter at all

Our common human experience is at one with the Gospel and with history. It is "generally necessary" to have the sense of hearing, and yet a Beethoven may be deaf, and remain a Beethoven, because he has so sublime a spiritual ear : it is generally necessary to have sight, and yet a blind statesman may direct the Post Office, and a blind poet may continue to enjoy a supreme power of vision. The laws of hygiene are so necessary that thousands perish for lack of them ; yet a peasant may live to be a hundred in a cottage without drains or practicable windows, because he has the essential secret of an active and simple life.

The whole body is not an eye, and no member can rightly say, "I have no need of thee." Neither is the whole Church a bishop : it is also a prophet ; it is also a brotherhood, with freedom and self-government, as Quakers, Congregation-



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alists, and others have shown. It has in fact, "first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that powers, then gifts of healings, helps, wise counsels, tongues," and also Sacraments and other things.

Does not the answer to the difficulty we have tried to face run on these lines? It is not the ideal to enter the Kingdom in a maimed condition, but it is better than stopping outside. And we are prone to forget that the historic Church is maimed, as well as the free Churches; maimed in every age, as one point or other comes to the front and excludes others. It is for God to judge, and to prove, what is the more vital loss or the more essential gain. And the verdict of our Lord is certainly not light on those shortcomings and sins which specially beset an historic Church: it was safer to be among the publicans and sinners than among the orderly and orthodox Pharisees. Thus it is not difficult to see why at one time a greater blessing

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may be given to an unsacramental sect than to the richly dowered Church of Catholic tradition.

Therefore when we say that the Sacraments are "generally" necessary to salvation, we must interpret that crucial word, not as meaning "universally" in the exclusive sense, nor of course in the loose modern signification of the word, but as meaning "necessary to mankind as a whole." And here perhaps we touch the real weakness of non-sacramental systems : they are too "wise and good !" (and the words take a shade of irony) for human nature's daily food. They are for little aristocracies ; they lack universality and humanity, and are therefore, in spite of the admirable fruit which has come from them, not likely to be permanent and catholic.

It remains true that sacramentalism is at the heart of Christianity. It remains true that the Sacraments have been the means of grace and the very life-blood of the greatest saints in a vast multitude ;

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that Christendom grew up round the altar, and that when the altar has been overturned or neglected, religion has steadily lost its hold upon the people at large.

This, it would seem, the world is coming to see. But the growing tendency towards sacramentalism would be seriously checked if its upholders refused to face all the facts of experience; if they denied that it is possible for the inward grace to be manifested, for instance, through the outwardness of good works instead of through the appointed ordinances, or if they ignored the reality of such sacramentalism as that of Stephen Grellet, the Friend who summed up the Quaker view—saying, not that there is no sacramentalism, but that every event of life may be turned into a sacrament and a means of grace, in the words :

I very much doubt whether, since the Lord by his grace brought me into the faith of his dear Son, I have ever broken bread or

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drunk wine, even in the ordinary course of life, without the remembrance of, and some devout feeling regarding, the broken body and the blood-shedding of my dear Lord and Saviour.

To which we can offer no other criticism but the one word, "This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone."

Only, if we dare to offer it, we must be ready also to turn that divine criticism back upon ourselves.

We also have failed and come short, we whose life centres round the altar, we who proclaim the Sacraments as the very essential element which distinguishes Christianity from other religions, we who rejoice in the order and the grace of the apostolic succession, of us also it may often be said that there is one thing we lack—or indeed more than one thing often enough. When religion has decayed, as it has here and there in certain places and times, the thing wanting has been a belief in the Spirit of God Him-

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self: religion has, as we say, become formal: that is to say, men have preferred the vessel to its content, have put the means above the end, and have forgotten to take in the spiritual grace that was given them. There is much routine in all the Churches to-day, and dire need of a spiritual revival. Is it not certain that we have not been true to our opportunities, that we have too little sought the Holy Spirit, and that we all need a great restoration of the prayer that is the earnest seeking after God himself, and the quiet waiting upon him to learn his will?

Let us then press hard for both sides of the truth. Let us lay hold of it with both our hands.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE POWER OF SILENCE FOR HEALING AND CONVERSION

By J. C. FITZGERALD, C.R.

THIS progressive twentieth century, with all its restless activities and rediscovers of talents hidden in the soil of humanity, consecrated by Incarnate Love, forces us once again to realize the power of silence. As the Swiss inscription says : " Sprechen ist silbern, Schweigen ist golden " (Speech is silver, Silence is golden) ; or, as Maeterlinck would rather express it, Speech is of Time, Silence is of Eternity. The true attitude of the soul is best expressed in the first verse of the 62nd Psalm (R.V. Margin). " My soul is silent unto God : from Him

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cometh my salvation" (or health of spirit, soul, and body).

This waiting in stillness upon God leads to knowledge, *i.e.* to perception of the mysteries of God. To such it is given to know the mysteries of God. But knowledge leads us to immortality and enables us to use those mighty spiritual forces which surround us in our life in Christ.—“This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only True God, and HIM whom Thou didst send, even JESUS CHRIST (S. John xvii. 3, R.V.). And “the people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits” (Dan. xi. 32). “Be still (cease from your anxieties and efforts) and know God” (Ps. xlvi. 10) is a command we ought to make a first duty to-day. The motto, “Ambitious to be quiet” (1 Thess. iv. 11), which is inscribed on Dean Vaughan’s tomb in Llandaff Cathedral, may well be written over the sanctuary of our inner life. “Dominus non in commotione” (God is not in restlessness),

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words of S. Augustine, will lead us as they led him to find our true centre in God.

God grant that the readers of this book which is one of the many fruits of the "Mission of Help to New Zealand" in 1910, may become "storage batteries of spiritual force which will discharge themselves only when they reach the person towards whom they are directed." If this is the blessed result, we may look for a much more efficient ministry among both clergy and laity in the Catholic Church in England. How much need there is of such helpers both in the ministry of healing and the ministry of conversion! The conservation of strength through silence seems to be one of the special needs of our day, if our Lord's promise is to be realized, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father" (S. John xiv. 12).



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### I. THE POWER OF SILENCE FOR HEALING

1. *The Healer Himself*.—(1) Three conditions have been laid down, viz.: A clean soul, great compassion, and a love which transcends the bounds of self-interest. The healer, whether priest, layman, or woman, must seek to be free from all that ministers to the gratification of the separated self.

It follows from this that, if we are to be used to heal, we must know something of S. Paul's experience expressed in the words: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20, R.V.). Christ is still the great Healer, we are only the instruments whom He uses, and through whom He stretches forth healing hands to-day.

(2) How is this to be developed? There are many methods used by "the Spirit of life," but I will only mention one which has to-day received the bless-

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ing of God. If we are to be crucified with Christ, we must often concentrate upon His Passion. A crucifix has been found a great help to this. I would suggest this method to the reader. Place a crucifix on the East wall, the region of light. Kneel, or sit if the posture is easier for this exercise, about six feet from the crucifix: this had better be done after fasting, and so in the early morning: Offer the first collect of the Communion Office: before kneeling or sitting, stand facing the crucifix, stretch out the arms in the form of a cross, inwardly resolving to put on Christ, to take His yoke and bear His burden, and so far as possible live the Christ life in the world. Make the sign of the Cross and realize that the warfare is not with flesh and blood but with the invisible powers of evil (see Eph. vi. 12, *et seq.*).

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Now humbly recite one of the Penitential Psalms, then kneel and repeat the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. Then

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let the student gaze upon the crucifix, trying to realize the absolute presence of the Lord. Ask for a right judgment in any given matter, concentrating the mind firmly upon the crucifix and in faith awaiting the answer. The result of this exercise will be that you obtain the power of concentration and of banishing thought, and increase of will power; also an increase of power in helping others without expenditure of your own vital force.<sup>1</sup> God who is "silent in His love" (Zeph. iii. 17, R.V.) will in this silence enable the soul to ascend towards HIM and be wrapped round with His Love.

### 2. *Groups of Silent Prayer for Healing.*

—If it is true that there is nothing so potent as the magic of the human mind stayed upon God, then how much more may a group of persons, fired with the definite object of attaining power and

<sup>1</sup> Cp., however, S. Mark iv. 36. They took Him even as He was, i.e. apparently quite exhausted with teaching, so hath He slept in the storm.—ED.

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using it to the benefit of an individual, build up a powerful thought-form capable of enormous spiritual and physical effect in the world. It is for this reason that small groups of persons should be formed for active prayerful thought, in definite places and for a definite time and object. Such a group must be most carefully composed.

(1) Each member must have a complete trust in the others. All should have the same object and desire. A want of harmony between one or other member will breed failure.

(2) The group must meet on the basis of silence, inner as well as outer. All outside interests must be laid aside.

(3) After a time it will not be needful to meet personally ; if the right time is known, each member of the group should imagine himself or herself there, and that is all that is necessary.

(4) If a person is to be brought forward upon whom the healing influence is to be directed, a photograph of the

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person should be placed where all can see it, or the name of the person should be definitely and clearly stated.

(5) Ten minutes' concentrated thought on the individual is quite enough, the object being to exert an influence for cure on this person if the Lord will. It must be "if the Lord will," for we cannot have or wish to have a world without the cross of suffering. It is most important to bear this in mind so that we may not be discouraged by any want of success in a given case.

3. *Illustrations of Healing drawn from my own Experience.*—The means used after gaining power through silence have been mainly two, which are on a line with our Lord's miracles of healing in the gospel days, viz. : healing at a distance, and healing through the sacramental contact of "the laying on of hands," or, in the case of a priest, of "Holy Unction." I will group my illustrations under these two heads.

(1) An illustration of healing by sug-

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gestion at a distance. Suggestion may be described as the influence of one created spirit on another, and when it tends to lead him to the great Healer it is healthy and lawful.

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One who had suffered for years from epileptic fits, applied to me and asked me to treat him. He had faith to be healed, and believed that this healing would come through my ministry. A time was fixed when, through this wireless telegraphy on the spiritual plane, he could be still to receive power. I concentrated upon his photograph after preparing in stillness, and sent strong thoughts to his subconscious mind and inner spirit. Our Lord's words have proved true in his case. "According to your faith be it done unto you" (S. Matt. ix. 29). Since then I have been able to minister to him near at hand. The result has been a renewal of strength from the inner sanctuary of his being. This inner power has been the means of practically

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dispelling disease from his physical body.

\* \* \* \*

(2) Some illustrations of healing through the sacramental contact of "the laying on of hands" and "Holy Unction." In some of the following cases; either "the laying on of hands" or "Holy Unction" was administered; in others of them both were employed.

In the first two illustrations which I give the cure was almost if not quite instantaneous. One was brought to me in a state of blindness from rheumatism which had settled on the optic nerve. Her own doctor had pronounced her incurable through medical science, so she at once asked for spiritual healing. A small group of silent prayer was formed round her, and I laid hands on her, with the result that all pain was removed, and she can now see perfectly. Her own doctor pronounced her cure miraculous.

The other was the case of a church

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worker, who also had disease at once removed from the eyes by the same ministry. This was in the quiet and silence of a Retreat.

The only other two illustrations which I will choose out of many similar ones are so much on the lines of our Lord's Healing in the gospel days that I will (with permission of the sufferers) enter more into details.

In a letter I was asked to minister to one who had a tumour in the throat, with the doctor's permission to seek help through means of this kind. Meanwhile the family prayed in silence at home while these ministries were being performed. In a letter received shortly after from this person the following words were written (I quote from memory): "When our Lord through you pronounced my forgiveness and then ministered to my body, the words rang in my ears, 'But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, He said unto him that



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was palsied; I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house' (S. Luke v. 24)." Recently, in another letter, a perfect cure was reported.

The last illustration is that of an elderly lady, who lay for weeks in bed with a low fever. For some reason medical aid could not reduce the high temperature. One day while lying thus silent and still, she had a sort of vision. She saw a white scroll with these words written on it: "Peter's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought HIM for her, and HE stood over her and rebuked the fever; and it left her" (S. Luke iv. 38). She was the mother of one who had married a Peter, and after this vision I was sent for as this had strengthened her faith to seek healing from our Lord in His church. After celebrating the Holy Eucharist, the Church's Prayer meeting, with those of the family who were able to be present in that heavenly silence which follows

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the consecration, I was taken to her sick-bed and ministered to her. Soon, to quote her own words, "she rose to minister to her family." A few Sundays after she was present at the Holy Eucharist to thank God for her recovery.

Before passing away from the power of silence for healing, I must say that in many of my cases the patients have died." Does this mean failure? I should say, "Certainly not," as the whole aspect of death was changed, and it was much more a translation than a death. In four instances that are very vivid in my memory still, I should say that our Lord's words were true in each case. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in ME shall never die" (S. John xi. 26). True, the worn-out physical body had to be laid aside, but the spirit was surrendered pure and strong into the hands of their Saviour and Master.

### II. THE POWER OF SILENCE FOR CONVERSION

1. *The Minister of Conversion.*—Years ago I remember hearing how General Gordon, one of our greatest nineteenth-century mystics, prepared for a battle. He put a handkerchief over his tent door to preserve the atmosphere of stillness, while he waited upon God in silence. When in battle afterwards he met the African chiefs, he said that it made all the difference to him that he had first met them in prayer in the Presence of the great Father of all. Being myself the son of an old Crimean veteran, and also the brother of a soldier, I felt, when I was called to evangelistic work, that this preparation would make all the difference in the battle of a mission. As a young sergeant said to me in South Africa during the “Mission of Help” in 1904, “I have fought in many battles against the Boers, but these were child’s play compared

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to the battle against spiritual enemies in this mission."

Conversion is the passage from death to life, from the little dark prison-house of individualistic self-love to the glorious sunshine of the fellowship of Divine and human love. We pass from death to life because we love the brethren. •

Like Charles Kingsley, if we are to win for God the wills of men and women which have been chained down by the evil one and by the cruel competitive system of our day, we, too, must see reflected on the still surface of the soul the Vision Beautiful. As he was nearing his time to depart and to be with Christ, he woke up from a swoon with his face lit up and with these words on his lips, "How beautiful God is, how beautiful God is."

Meditation before a crucifix, as suggested in preparation for Healing, is most valuable too for this ministry of Conversion. As we put on Christ, His compassion for the multitude vibrates in

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our thoughts and we go forth charged for the battle. A simple prayer at the end of this time of silence is, "O give me the comfort of Thy help again and stablish me with Thy free Spirit, then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee" (Ps. li.).

It is dangerous to give illustrations of conversion perhaps, but may I give two from my own experience? And the reader must take them for what they are worth. Certainly the result was permanent in these two cases, and it was the power of silence which brought them to conversion.

### 2. *Two Illustrations of Conversion.*—

(1) A north country parish was preparing for a mission, and a body of the faithful had been praying for it for nearly a year before it actually began. I had tried to prepare as suggested above, as I had been chosen to conduct the mission. One day, during the time of preparation, a very leading woman in

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the parish, who was known to be "a notorious evil liver," was going along a lonely road to feed her pigs. As she was on her way she met a priest who asked her if she was coming to the Mission. She put down her bucket to speak to him. He was gone, and, as she said, "it must have been a vision." She accepted it as a call, and came to the Mission on the first Saturday night. When I came into church to conduct the Mission she said at once, "Why, that was the priest that I saw." The result was, to the great joy of the faithful, that she came out boldly before the whole congregation to confess Christ openly and surrendered her whole life to Him. Her influence, which before the Mission was used against God and His Church, was now used for His glory and (to quote the words of a parishioner) "she became a real mother in Israel."

(2) The other case of conversion is rather different from this. It took place after a Silent Prayer Meeting at the end

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of a Mission Service. The person converted was a great lover of music and singing. On this night during the Silence strains of music were heard. That was all the first time. The next night before the Mission Service I was met by the shining face of this same person and asked to listen to the vibrations of sound in the Church. I certainly felt that there was a strong spiritual atmosphere, but heard nothing. That evening, in the Stillness again, a Presence appeared to this raptured soul, and all seemed clear as the Will was surrendered in conversion to him. It was put to me in this way. I have often felt that there was a substance behind the vibrations of music and singing, and I have found JESUS CHRIST, the eternal Word (or Logos), to be the substance of all these higher vibrations. Later I was asked this question, "May I go?" which I discovered meant, "May I give my life wholly to Jesus?" The result was a life of spiritual union with HIM in the special vocation of a

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Community. It was the power of Silence which in this case led to the surrender of will to the Heavenly Bridegroom, and to the realization of the fact (which S. Paul probably learnt, too, in silence) that "in Him all things consist" or hold together (Col. i. 17). This last illustration leads me to a third point.

3. *The Power of a Quaker Prayer Meeting at the End of a Mission Service or Retreat.*—If the Mission Service takes the order of the instruction for the mind, the sermon from the Gospel story for the heart, or seat of the affections, then the Prayer of Quiet following these will powerfully affect the will. So, too, in a Retreat when the threefold way is followed, the Purgative, the Illuminative, and the Unitive way, as the soul is cleansed and enlightened, through the Silence it attains most readily to union with God. Prayer has been described as a certain intimate friendship with God. "What friends have, they have in common"; this is true



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of human friendships, but these friendships are developed in silence. Maeterlinck gives a simple illustration of this in the chapter on silence in his book, *The Treasure of the Humble*. One whom he held dear above all others wrote to him, "We do not know each other yet, we have not yet dared to be silent together." This is even more true of that wonderful Friendship with God to which we are admitted as Christians through union with God Incarnate. After our Lord had spoken the Parable of the Vine and the need of abiding in HIM, He says, "I have called you friends; for all things that I hear from my Father I have made known unto you" (S. John xv. 15). Only let us dare to be silent ourselves in the Presence of God, and in our Mission work lead others to Silent Prayer, and the secrets of our Father, the hidden wisdom of God will be revealed to us freely. Even the great God Himself does not withhold secrets from those whom He calls His friends. Thus shall

we be Sacraments of His Presence to the many who long for peace to-day, and God has many such amid the strife of war which lies around us. His commission to His Church is the same as of old, "Preach the Gospel, heal the sick." May this chapter on "The Power of Silence for Healing and Conversion" lead some to dare to seek Him in silence so as to radiate the power of His all-embracing Love to these labourers and burden bearers, that they may find their true rest in HIM.

In true spiritual Healing, conversion is a necessary part, as it begins with the will as its centre and works out to the psychic and physical parts of our nature. It heals the whole of our nature, spirit, soul, and body. In conclusion may I suggest this eighteenth-century prayer to any who wish to be fellow-workers with God in restoring human nature, made for His abode, to Himself in one glorious friendship of love.

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“Grant us grace to rest from all sinful deeds and thoughts, to surrender ourselves wholly unto Thee, and keep our souls *still before Thee like a still lake*, so that the beams of Thy grace may be mirrored therein, and may kindle in our hearts the glow of faith and love and prayer. Amen.”

*Note.*—With the author's consent certain passages which raised questions not relevant to the main purpose of this book, are omitted in this and any subsequent editions.—ED

## CHAPTER XII

### THE COLOUR OF SILENCE <sup>1</sup>

By L. V. HODGKIN

“MUSIC is the silence of heaven,” the old saying tells us. “And colour is its speech.”

Dimly we apprehend something of what that speech may be, as we watch the sunset glories flaming across the sky. “Aren’t the angels singing something?” the child asks; and the child left in each one of us answers “Yes.” But the colour of silence? Can silence have a colour? That, we Friends know full well. As we sit together, Sunday after Sunday, our united Silence takes on a definite colour of its own, a colour dyed

<sup>1</sup> This chapter appeared in *The British Friend* in February 1911.

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with the thoughts and aspirations of many hearts—a colour of lives.

“Is there too much silence in our worship? Or is there too little?” we ask ourselves sometimes. But in our inmost hearts we are conscious that there is a deeper question far more important for us to answer: “Is our Silence the right colour?” Once get the colour right, be it but for a few moments, or for an hour, or for a lifetime, then the right speech will flow from it irresistibly, and the Word of God with Power will be among us once more.

It is a region of which it is difficult to speak except in metaphors, fragmentarily,—this “deep, dear Silence” of ours. In trying to “express the inexpressible” each one instinctively chooses the metaphor most familiar to him in daily life. Christianity was saturated, in the early ages, with the legal analogies that were familiar to the great legal Fathers of the Church. But there is room for many others. When will some musician

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intèrpret Divine mysteries for us in the language of the harmony of music ? Or some mathematician use lines and numbers and curves to symbolize eternal truth ?

To some minds, perhaps, the analogy of colour may seem forced and strained. Yet it is St. Paul who speaks of the "many-coloured wisdom" of our God, of the "breadth and length and height and depth"—metaphors all; until all metaphors drop away in "the fulness of God," "the love of Christ that passeth knowledge."

It was one night, long ago, in Palestine, that the colour of the Silence first became real to me. Our tents had been pitched under the shadow of the dark hills that lie to the north of the Sea of Galilee, close to the Waters of Merom. That was a twilight colour : the brooding peace of purple, grape-coloured mountains against a clear pale sky. The alphabet of silence is given in symbols of the natural world around us that we

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may learn to recognize its message in our hearts. "God taught us to read; He lent us this world for a book." Or, in the poet's words:—<sup>1</sup>

These gems have life in them ; their colours speak,  
Say what words fail of. So do many things—  
The scent of jasmine, and the fountain's plash,  
The moving shadows on the far-off hills,  
The slanting moonlight and our clasping hands.  
. . . there's an ocean round our words  
That overflows and drowns them. Do you know  
Sometimes when we sit silent, and the air  
Breathes gently on us from the orange trees,  
It seems that with the whisper of a word  
Our souls must shrink, get poorer, more apart ;  
Is it not true ?  
. . . . It is true.  
Speech is but broken light upon the depth  
Of the unspoken.

Language fails ; but the colour of the Silence remains, as we are slowly learning.

Who does not know the difference between a meeting held in a drab silence, and a meeting where the silence is grey ?

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, "The Spanish Gypsy."

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A drab silence is made generally by a company of tired men and women, busy with countless cares, dusty with worries, each one wrapped in his own thoughts, bearing his own burdens, unmindful of his neighbours except to criticize them. Then, suddenly, or it may be very gradually, that drab silence changes. Perhaps a living message is given and uttered, however feebly and falteringly, by some humble, faithful soul. Or else, and this is even more wonderful and mysterious, it may be in silence and by silence alone that the Silence is changed. What was a dreary drab has become a tender grey. The worshippers are just as tired, just as careworn, just as dusty. The problems that await them outside are every whit as pressing. And yet even these clamorous, insistent selves of ours have been merged into the larger Self. We are conscious of a Presence with us, brooding over us, changing us, softer than any grey twilight cloud—the overshadowing of the Spirit's wing.



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A blue silence is much rarer in a building. It is the silence that is found often out of doors, sometimes during simple services on ship-board, far away at sea. There, the two blue hemispheres, above and below, frame all the kneeling figures and fill in the pauses of the prayers, while the dim line of the separating and uniting horizon rises and falls rhythmically behind the bowed heads of the worshippers. Blue too, as with the light of a living sapphire, is the silence of a little meeting I remember in a Friend's house high up on the Blue Mountains, far away in New South Wales. And blue, but a deeper blue, blue as a sapphire's depths, was the wonderful silence of the great Conference at Edinburgh, a silence that, once experienced, can never be forgotten. For this deep blue is the creative silence in the world of thought, the silence in which things happen, and deeds are done,—done so actually and truly in the inner sphere of Power that the mere outward doing of them in the

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material world follows naturally and spontaneously, and almost as a matter of course.

“Then you mean that silence is coloured by its surroundings? Is that the idea of ‘The Colour of Silence’?”  
Partly, but not altogether. It happens sometimes that this wonderful instrument of ours, this united Silence of many hearts, is so entirely in harmony with its surroundings that the barriers between the Seen and the Unseen are broken down. Rather, they melt away. The material becomes insensibly tinged and dyed with the spiritual; the spiritual functions through the material, until they blend in one inseparable Reality. Thus we learn, in a foretaste in this world, the truth of what the philosopher Saint-Martin describes of the life to come. He says :

“In the higher world it is not as in our dark dwelling-place, wherein sounds can be compared only with sounds, colours with colours, and a substance only with

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that which is directly related to 'it. There all things are more closely related with each other. There the light is sounding, melody produces light, colours have motion because they are living, and the objects are all at once sounding, transparent and moving, and can penetrate each other."

But this perfect blending of Seen and Unseen is rare. Happily it is not needful to our worship, however blessed when it comes. I have known a little, dark Meeting-house, with no colour visible to break the monotony of its neutral walls and yet more neutral fittings, become filled with the crimson silence of glowing life—a blood-red silence of sacrifice and of surrender, in which, though few words were uttered, without any outward symbols of Bread and Wine, every soul present did actually and truly partake of the Body broken, the Blood shed, for thee, for me.

Or again, the same room, yet not the same, though it stood in the same place,

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filled with a silence of purple shot through with gleams of gold, as we missed one who had been wont to worship with us, and realized that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it. For gold is the silence of conquest, of victory, of harvest and completed life.

And green; green is the silence of youth, full of the colour of hope, like young beech leaves when the sap is running high and life is reclothing itself everywhere in new forms. Green is the silence of strength, of energy, of vigour, the silence that bears fruit in new undertakings, and fresh efforts to grapple with old problems.

“A pretty idea, but too fanciful”: it is easy to hear the comment. But is it fanciful? It might be, if these many-coloured silences in themselves were all. Surely not fanciful if this little parable of the colours helps us to understand that all the different shades and hues of thought are necessary for our complete communion. In so far as each soul is

being faithful to the highest vision it can see, and following the Light, wherever It may lead; in so far as our colours, however different, are pure and true and sincere, so far each one is helping to make up the silence we are waiting for, the complete Silence. That can come only with the blending of all the colours, the silence of the whole prismatic ray,—“the rainbow round about the Throne”—when every thought in every heart is in harmony with “the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.” Then only shall we lose and find ourselves in the perfect silence—the white silence of completed praise.

## EPILOGUE

### SILENCE SERMON ACROSS THE WATER<sup>1</sup>

By CYRIL HEPHER

There was silence and I heard a voice.—Job iv. 16.

MAN lives his life on three planes, the material, the intellectual, and the spiritual. For the highest exercise of his higher powers, it is necessary for him to learn how to bring the lower elements of his nature into quiescence, so that his entire consciousness may be concentrated upon the higher. He cannot escape from physical conditions, and so long as he is in the body his bodily condition will profoundly affect his

<sup>1</sup> Preached in S. Paul's Cathedral, Boston, December, 1912.

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mental and his spiritual capacity. He is a very good philosopher who can philosophize with the toothache. It demands a very high degree of spiritual attainment to be able to rise above the trammels and the limits of pain to concentration upon spiritual things. Those who have attained to the highest spiritual consciousness have not disdained to use bodily discipline to set free the spirit. This is the reason why, among other things, fasting, or the discipline of food, has been practised ever since man began his search for God. Only in a disciplined body can the spirit of man live in freedom. An undisciplined and disorderly body is the ruin of all intellectual advance, and an undisciplined mind is an insuperable obstacle to the free activity of the human spirit.

Now, let us examine, first, upon the lower planes, the relation of intellect and body. The thinker is all but compelled to bring his body to stillness if

he would think deeply. He will not carry his thinking, or his mental concentration very far, unless his body is at rest: Therefore the student sits down, and once engrossed in his work he becomes still and motionless. Peripatetic philosophers, who think out their problems as they walk in their gardens, do it because they find that by gradual, easy, rhythmic movement they lose the consciousness of the body in the concentration of the intellect. Is there any stillness more still than hard thinking? You enter the private sanctum of some great master of commerce or of finance, whose brain is the ruling power over many organizations. Outside, in the offices where typewriters click and telephone bells ring, and voices sound, are the lower forms of activity: but when you enter into the great man's room where the powerful brain is at work, you discover intense activity and intense physical stillness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Hugh Benson, *The Light Invisible*, p. 123.



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It is not less true upon the spiritual sphere. Man has not reached his highest flight when he has learnt mental concentration, when he knows how to forget the existence of his body in the interest of his brain. That is only the half-way house. There is a bigger space still to traverse before the intellect itself comes to quiescence, as a yet greater capacity in man's nature, a yet higher form of consciousness than the intellectual, begins to appear. When once man has fastened his desires upon the spiritual, if he would set free the very highest power latent within his soul he must learn to bring the intellect itself under control. He must learn how to still the intellect for the sake of the spirit, even as on a lower plane he had to learn how to still the physical for the sake of the intellectual.

Man is a spiritual being. He is capable of consciousness higher than the purely intellectual. He is capable of spiritual consciousness; of the con-

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sciotusness, immediate, personal, and direct of God, not merely of right and duty, but of the Supreme Spirit Himself. There is more in man than intellect.<sup>1</sup> Other elements in him vibrate in sympathy with God. It is when we pass from the purely intellectual to spiritual consciousness that speech, which is intellectual communication, fails us.

The power and charm of music lies in its ministry to that consciousness in us which is ineffable, *i.e.* untranslatable into word forms. Silence need not mean

<sup>1</sup> The last thing I desire is to disparage the intellect or to suggest that it has no part or lot in the highest acts of the soul. Even the body has a true part, so long as man is in the flesh, in his highest moments. It is playing its part even when forgotten. The intellect is the physical instrument of all our consciousness. It is a noble service that reason offers to the soul when it surrenders itself to be the receiving instrument, itself forgotten in the use, of the Divine Voice. "Suspect everything," said S. Theresa, "which weakens the use of our reason; for by such a way we shall never attain to the liberty of the Spirit." But the highest soaring of the intellect is that deliberate abandonment of itself to the illumination of God. It is in higher exercise when it becomes the instrument of the Divine Wisdom than when, by its own unaided strivings, it wrestles with knowledge, for then it has learnt how to cease from its own eager toil, and be, instead, a listener.

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the mere absence of speech. It may mean that our whole nature is awake, stirring, moving upwards, pouring itself out, not in speech but in the keenest longing and aspiration, or in the deepest wonder and awe. Even in our human relationships, when all the depths in man awake, speech fails him. Which of us has no recollection of moments when no speech could tell the half that was in him to say? We have not travelled far in friendship or love, while we are still dependent upon speech for the communication of spirit with spirit. Speech is necessary with an acquaintance and with a new friend, but when friendship has deepened and enlarged, and friend truly knows friend, words are no longer essential, and those deep silences, which are the very life and breath of the highest human fellowship, become fuller of communion than any speech. I went once to an old and dear friend, who had lost his wife : they were a singularly devoted pair, and all of us

who knew him wondered how he would face this devastating blow. I pondered, as I sat in the train journeying towards him, what I was to say to him when we met. I tried to find the words which would comfort him, or at least tell him my sympathy, but I do not need to say that when we met, for some time there was no word spoken at all. Our hands gripped. Words would have been a profanation. In true fellowship the most sacred moments of grief or joy lie too deep for speech. It would be a mistake, in obedience to our conventions, to force the reluctant words to lips that are longing to be silent. The deepest communion of all is not speech, but that sacramental communion, the glance of the eye, the grip of the hand, which carry us further than any protestations that our lips could utter. The closest communion lies in the sphere of silence.

And if it is true in our human relationships, it is more true in things spiritual. If silence is a true ministry to the highest

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forms of fellowship, it is a mighty means of quickening the consciousness of God. *There was silence and I heard a voice.* Men look to hear the Voice of God everywhere but in stillness. Like Elijah, they expect that God will only speak to man in the fire or the earthquake, in the cyclone or the storm. God speaks, it is true, in great cataclysms which from time to time shake the consciousness of the world into the recollection of His Presence in the affairs of men. He certainly spoke to us all when the *Titanic* went down ; but we are in error if we think that we must look to happenings like these in order to hear the speech of God. It is only the savage who thinks there must be thunder when God speaks. Watch the Prophet. His mantle is wrapped about his face. He has retired within his soul ; he has entered the secret chamber of his being, that inner consciousness where, when a man has entered, he finds God. In the darkness, the silence, and the solitude

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Elijah heard the still Voice of God speaking. It was a still small Voice.

I speak to men and women who are themselves temples of Deity. There is not one into whose face I look but is himself the very tabernacle of the Divine Presence. God is great. So great, so transcendent, that the glory of His Presence penetrates the world. Our nature is so fashioned for God that the Divine Presence fills our whole being, body, soul, and spirit. Man, like earth, is crammed with God. Unconscious of that Presence he may be; he may be yet only self-conscious, his God-consciousness not awakened; but in the very centre of his being there is the secret chamber of the Presence, of which the Christ spoke when He said, "Enter into thy chamber, and shut to the door." If you will be content to take pains to retire within yourself, to be still, to be alone, to expel one by one from your consciousness all interrupting sounds, and the thoughts of daily life,

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if you will retire into your inmost self, and there shut the door against distractions, within your own heart you will find God.

And what is God if not a voice ! That is God as Christians know Him. You cannot be in the Presence of God, or at least you cannot wake to the consciousness of the Divine Presence, and not receive the speech of God. When other sounds have been made to cease, when the busy and restless brain has been stilled, and the whole nature, by deliberate and constant practice, silenced, then in that silence you will find the speech of God. The speech of God is not as the speech of men. He does not frame His messages into the words of any language. The speech of God is communication of Spirit with spirit. That communion lies deeper than words.

Speak to Him, then, for He hears thee, and spirit  
with Spirit can meet :  
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands  
and feet.

There are two ways in which this consciousness of God can be practised. The first is in solitary meditation. Thousands of people in the New World are crying out for meditation. They are weary of a religion which cannot give them the power of an immediate contact with the Unseen, and are turning away to find what they seek in strange places and strange practices, to New Thought, to Christian Science, to Theosophy, and what not; as though the holy practice of meditation was a thing unknown within the Church of the Ages. She is the Mother of meditation; but there are too few of her children who will take the pains to practise it. Who would say that the claim of one half-hour a day of silent meditation in the Presence of God is an absurd claim, even for the busiest man? I suppose that even the New World hardly produces bigger workers than William Ewart Gladstone. That man, when the pressure of political strain was at its highest,



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never passed a day without the most serious and rigorous attention to Divine things.

May I suggest to you a very simple though not an easy method of practising the holy art of meditation? Let me illustrate my meaning. There are two ways in which you may visit an Art Gallery: when you enter the great Galleries of Rome and Florence, you may go round the rooms with your Baedeker in your hand, or a book on Italian Art, bringing to the study of the pictures possibly a considerable degree of intellectual preparation. That is like the meditation which consists of reading the Bible with the aid of commentators, or to Bible study in which the intellect wrestles and strives by sheer hard thinking to extract from the Scripture its message. I pass by the hasty and rapid survey which brings to the picture gallery no effort or preparation whatsoever. There is another way: you may go to the Gallery and calmly take your

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place in front of a single picture, putting aside such considerations as to what school of art it belongs, or the critical apparatus that books would easily provide; you stand silent before that picture until your spirit has begun to feel the spiritual message that the great artist enshrined there. You gaze into the unfathomable eyes of his Madonna till you see his conception of motherhood, of mercy, truth, and love. There you stand, rapt and absorbed, bathing your soul in the artist's vision till your heart begins to glow and thrill; spirit is speaking with spirit. You have been silent, intellectually silent, listening, and to be silent is to be receptive. Bring to your meditation nothing but silence; leave behind the busy questioning of the intellect. The revelations in the Holy Word of God lie deeper than the brain; its secrets are not of the intellect—if they were the commentators would have the key of them; but as you bring your mind and spirit to stillness, to listening

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silence, beauty, joy, life pass into your being and become your own : you are learning the ways of meditation, yet what is simpler than to listen ? To realize one single word of the Eternal Life is enough to fill a year of our noisy restless days.

But there is another way. Some of you are practising it in this place, and I am glad to stand in this pulpit this morning and speak to you who are finding it. It is the way of meditation in fellowship. I wish I could take you with me to the distant village in New Zealand, where about two years ago I first experienced meditation in fellowship, in a little white church lying in a circle of pines and cypresses. The September afternoon was drawing to evening, and the dusk was settling over the land, as we passed into the silent church, a little group. It was Divine service without its common human aids. No choir sang to us, no preacher ascended the pulpit, no stoled and vested priest

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directed our approach to the Great Presence. We entered, we knelt, we were still, and our souls began to be united with a new and strange sense of fellowship in that Silence; and as the silence deepened there grew a deeper sense, the sense of the Presence, and the work of prayer, ever hard, became easy. Human aid we had, though not of the common sort. Seeking God side by side, every man helped his fellow. The half-hour sped away before any sound broke in upon our stillness, but when at length we rose, and passed out into the world again, we carried with us the knowledge that we had been near God. The echo of that Silence has reached this place from the other side of the world. Pray that it may enlarge itself yet farther and draw many into its circle. It is no small strength to know that here, as in many other places in the world, groups of men and women are learning to hear God's voice in this holy Silence within the fold of Christ's Holy Church.

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Men and women of Boston, I can lay claim to no knowledge of the conditions of your church life in America, but in England, Canada, and New Zealand I have had wide opportunities of seeing the churches of our Communion far extended. It is that experience that suggests to me a final question. Wherever I have been I have found men whose spiritual needs demanded more than they found in our ordinary conventionalized services. They ask for the sense of spiritual reality. They desire to lay hold of God and the Unseen World with a firmer grip. There are not wanting many who have turned from the Church to new and strange ways, seeking what they ought to find with us. It is no fault of our services, and no inadequacy in our sacraments, but in the way we present them. Have we not allowed an inherited tradition neither ancient, catholic, nor venerable to invade our freedom? Have we not allowed the aids to worship to encroach upon the

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place of the worship itself? Can we say now what S. Paul could say of Corinthian worship in his day, that were an unbeliever or unlearned person to enter our church during our Sunday worship he would be judged of all, and the secrets of his heart be made manifest, so that falling down upon his face he would worship God, and report that God is in us of a truth? This is surely what this modern world all about us is in search of. Might it not be that the restoration of holy silence to a greater place in our Church life, and in our Public Worship, would go far to win for us the inner heart of spiritual reality which would give to our liturgic song and sacramental offering a new and yet an old vitality?

For indeed, in this age of transition, the Church herself has need to be so filled with God that men may perceive the spiritual power alike of her message and her ministry. Never was there a wider interest in religion than to-day,

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nor a more wistful and pathetic longing to know and to experience the realities of the spiritual world. Never, also, a more informed and critical demand that; whatever professes to be spiritual, shall itself be the evidence of its profession. What could more directly serve this need of our mother, the Church, than that her children, in every place, should give themselves to this still waiting upon the Eternal Presence, where if they behold God only as beneath a veil, or in a mirror, they yet may know Him, each for himself, as friend knows friend, in this holy Fellowship of Silence ?

THE END

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